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TIMES OF REFRESHING

TO THE

CHURCH OF CHRIST.

Sketches of Church History.

BY THE

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PREFACE.

THE following pages were written during a season of ill health and suspension of active clerical labours. The object of the work has been to show that in every age of the Christian Church there have been *the continuance and manifestation of that reviving influence of the Holy Spirit, so abundantly imparted on the day of Pentecost*, and of which all subsequent communications have been the further *developments*, ushering in "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord," thus fulfilling the promise of Christ,—*"I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever."* (John xiv. 16.) Some of the leading seasons, and the instrumentalities, by which this promise has been fulfilled, it has been the object of the Author to point out. He has availed himself of the testimonies of others for the illustration and confirmation of his own statements and views. The

seasons of refreshment granted to the Church in times past are encouragements to Christian expectation, and prayer for, a more glorious outpouring of the Holy Spirit; and the *earnests* of the coming glories of the Church in the latter days.

In sending the work to the press the Author has yielded to the advice of some esteemed Clerical brethren, who, after reading the MS., strongly urged its publication. He commends it, though with some reluctance on his part, to the candid acceptance of his readers, and to the blessing of God.

Sutton Rectory, Loughborough,
Jan., 1860.

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TIMES OF REFRESHING.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS—DESIGN OF THE WORK—TIMES OF REFRESHING—WHAT TIMES MEANT.

“CHURCH HISTORY,” as Neander well remarks, “is a living witness of the Divine power of Christianity;—a school of Christian experience;—a voice sounding through the ages, of instruction, of doctrine, of reproof, and of encouragement.” In every age God has had a Church in the world, made up of those who are living witnesses of *the truth*,—the honoured instruments of communicating its light and blessings to others. These, in all ages, have been special objects of his favour;—“a seed to serve Him”;—“a people whom He has formed for himself to show forth his praises”;—“lights” shining amidst prevailing darkness and

corruptions;”—to these He has granted “times of refreshing,” to strengthen their faith and joy. The design of the present work is to bring under review,—not in continuous and consecutive order,—some of these blessed seasons of revival,—in the *past* and *present* history of the Church. The providential dispensations, the various instrumentalities, by which these seasons were introduced, and their happy results,—are the accomplishments of Divine prophecies and promises,—and the earnest and harbingers of the coming glory of the Church in “the latter days.”

The Apostle St. Peter, addressing an astonished and awakened multitude, principally Jews, exhorting and encouraging them to repentance, said to them,—“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, *when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord*; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.”* What are these “*times of refreshing*” of which the Apostle here speaks? Some consider St. Peter as referring to the *future* conversion of the Jewish nation and the happy times to be introduced by that event. Thus writes an able critic:—“No other meaning, it seems to me, will suit the words, but that of the times—the great season of joy and rest—which, it was understood, the coming

* Acts iii. 19—21.

of Messiah in his glory was to bring with it. That this should be connected by the Apostle with the conversion of the Jewish people, was not only according to the plain inference from prophecy, but doubtless was one of 'those things concerning the kingdom of God,' which he had been taught by his risen master." * This application of the words, to the *future* conversion of the Jews, and the glorious advent of Messiah, does not appear to be in accordance with the immediate *occasion* and *object* for which they were used,—which was to move and encourage the persons addressed to immediate repentance and conversion, which he assures them would be followed by "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord;" in other words, in *their* experience, issue in "joy and peace in believing" in Christ. It was as if the Apostle had said to them, "The times of refreshing—the happy times of Messiah, long foretold by the prophets, are at hand—are come; you are living in them; this glorious time of mercy is now begun, and is to continue to the close of the world; the 'times of refreshing,' comprehending in them the future conversion and forgiveness of your nation, the restitution or fulfilment of all that God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets, and the coming of Messiah in glory, have already dawned upon the world; repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out; and thus will you be partakers of the blessings of these 'times of refresh-

* Alford, Greek Testament, *in loco*.

ing,' and be prepared for the blessings of Christ's glorious return from heaven." This interpretation of the Apostle's words meets the exigency of those to whom they were addressed, which the mere holding out to them the assurance of pardon of sin, at a distant period, on the conversion of their nation and the return of the Saviour, would fail to do. This view of the meaning of the words is in full accordance with, and is confirmed by, the words of the same Apostle to an awakened multitude on the day of Pentecost:—"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." *

This interpretation of the Apostle's meaning, favoured and confirmed as it is by the more correct rendering of the Greek of the passage, assumes, as a fact, that the times of Messiah, and "the times of refreshing," are *identical*. This was clearly announced by the Baptist and by the Saviour himself. "Repent," said the Baptist, "for *the kingdom of heaven is at hand*." The Saviour declared as he journeyed through Galilee, "*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand*." † When He sent forth his twelve Apostles He charged them, saying, "Go preach, saying, *The kingdom of heaven is at hand*." ‡ And in another place Christ

* Acts ii. 38, 39. † Matt. iii. 2; Mark i. 15. ‡ Matt. x. 7.

declared, "*The kingdom of God is within or among you.*"* The kingdom of Christ was proclaimed and set up in the Ministry of Christ and his Apostles; the foundations of it were firmly and deeply laid in the teaching and facts of the Gospel. The Redeemer was inaugurated into the glories of his kingdom in his ascension to heaven, of which the wonders and blessings of the day of Pentecost were the proofs and the blessed fruits, to the world to the end of time. Thus were begun those "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord," which Peter proclaimed to the Jews; these blessed times are running onward, with various degrees of manifestation, and will continue till the coming of Messiah in his glory. The little word "*when*" ("*when* the times of refreshing shall come"), and by which the meaning of the passage is somewhat obscured, (ὅπως ἂν,) properly rendered, should be read "*so that,*" or, "*in order that,*" as in other passages where that sense is given and required (see Matt. vi. 5; Luke ii. 35; Acts xv. 17), and cannot mean "*when,*" as it is rendered in the authorized version. In support of this meaning of the Apostle, we add the opinions of learned expositors of the Greek text at the foot of our page.†

* Luke xvii. 21.

† Tertul. sic citat, *ut superveniant vobis*: ostendit ipsorum pœnitentiam acceleraturam illa tempora, &c.

Ut dies illa, quæ Judæis impœnitentibus terribilis erit, vobis

The latter part of this address of St. Peter, instead of being opposed to, rather supports this view of the Apostle's meaning :—"And He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you; whom the heaven must receive *until* the times of *restitution* of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." "The times of restitution," ἀχρι χρόνων ἀποκατάστασεως, accord-

suavissimus sit. Idem vocatur ἀπολυτρωσις, Luke xxi. 28, et σωτηρια, Rom. xiii. 11. *Tempora refrigerii*, vel, *consolationis*, apud Hebræos proverbialiter denotant, liberationem quamvis, sive temporalem, sive æternam.—*Poli Synop.*, in loco.

ὅπως ὃν—that so, in order that, as xv., xvii.; Luke ii. 35; Matt. vi. 5. The passage may be rendered, *that seasons of refreshment may come from the presence of the Lord*, and that He may send Jesus, who was before appointed for you. See 1 Peter i. 20. These *seasons of refreshment* seem to refer to *Christ's first coming*, and the consolations of his kingdom of grace, whereby is accomplished his promise, recorded Matt. ii. 29. Hesych. explains ἀναψυξις by ἀναπαυσις.—*Dr. Robinson*, in loco.

ὅπως ἂν ἔλθωσεν καιροὶ ἀναψύξεως, κ. τ. λ.—in order that they may come. The term καιροὶ ἀναψύξεως has been referred to the end of the world, to the destruction of Jerusalem, and to the time of *refreshment and peace* consequent upon the publication and spread of the Gospel. This last interpretation is more generally received; and it is in full agreement with the cherished hopes of the Jewish people, who looked forward to the reign of their Messiah as a period of repose from war and oppression, of great national prosperity and universal peace. See Isa. xxvii., xii.—*Trollope*, in loco.

ing to the best critics, should be rendered, *times of accomplishment or fulfilment of all things, foretold by the prophets*;—it includes the accomplishment of all things predicted, commencing with the setting up of Messiah's kingdom, and ending with his Second Advent. As one remarks,—“The blessedness and glory of our exalted Lord, his triumphs and dominion, the homage of angels and the gladness of heaven, all looked forward to brighter glories yet to come. His reception in heaven, and sitting at the right hand of the Majesty on high, were to introduce a new order in the Divine administration, a new series of ages, big with events of highest beneficence to man and honour to the ever blessed God. This is expressed by the general description of the *restitution* (or more properly translated, the *completion* or *consummation*) of all things which the Omniscient Spirit had given to the sons of men. The word ‘*until*’ does not always in the Scripture usage, denote a defined point of time, as the boundary of a foregoing period; but is repeatedly used to mark any considerable portion of time, *during which a course of events is in succession carried on*. The terms of the text plainly show that this must be its meaning here; for their evident sense is,—that the Lord Jesus occupies his present state of mediatorial dignity and dominion, through the interval of time, which the purposes of God will take for their unfolding and completion.”* These “times of fulfilment” and

* Dr. Pye Smith.

"times of *refreshing*" are parallel, and had begun; they had their *commencement* in the setting up of the Gospel dispensation, and will receive their *completion* and consummation in the second glorious advent of the Redeemer. The personal ministry of the Saviour to the Jews; the seasons of manifestation to his sorrowing disciples from his resurrection to his ascension to heaven—the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost; the conversion of multitudes at that time; the subsequent triumphs of the Gospel among all nations; the seasons of revival and extension of religion in subsequent ages; its glories and triumphs in the latter days—all are included; so that the *whole* dispensation of the Gospel, from its beginning to its close, may correctly and emphatically be called, "*times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.*"

The Gospel dispensation is *one continuous* dispensation to the end of the world. It is the *last*, and we are to look for no other. This statement may be startling to the minds of some who anticipate a dispensation, somewhat distinct in character and of superior light, blessedness, and glory, to the present under which we live. The view now stated is in accordance with the Scripture representation of the Gospel dispensation, as one continued development and fulfilment of the purposes and love of God, to be consummated by the coming of Christ in his glory. The terms "*day*," "*latter days*," "*last days*," we so often meet with both in the Old and New Testaments,

have reference to the Gospel dispensation, and express one *continuous* dispensation from the commencement of the kingdom of Christ to its close: there will be *different phases or manifestations of it*; but so far as we can see, we have no ground to expect that any other revelation of the Divine mercy will be vouchsafed to mankind. The royal Psalmist, looking forward to the times of Messiah, speaks of those times as one continued *day*:—“Thy people shall be willing in *the day of thy power*, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.”* This “day” of the Redeemer’s “power,” comprehends the entire dispensation of the Gospel, from the beginning to its glorious end. The great and glorious events to be made manifest and to be fulfilled in it, and which in Old Testament language are said to happen, in “the latter days,” are all to occur during the times of the Messiah, and are comprehended in those times. We have a striking illustration and confirmation of this in the remarkable prophecy of Zechariah:—“It shall come to pass in *that day*, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: but it shall be *one day* which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light. And it shall be in *that day* that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem, half of them towards the former sea, and half of them towards the hinder sea; in summer and in winter shall it be. And the Lord

* Psalm cx. 3.

shall be king over all the earth; and in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name One.”* The judicious Scott gives the following exposition of this remarkable prophecy:—“These words contain a compendious prophecy of the state of the Church, from its establishment in the Apostolic days to the glorious times which are expected in the predicted Millennium. *In that day*—under the Christian dispensation, for a long season, the light would neither *be clear nor dark*; it would be greatly obscured by ignorance, heresy, superstition, and idolatry, yet not wholly extinguished; and the state of the Church would be much deformed by sin and calamities, yet some holiness and consolation would be found. The period could neither be called a clear, bright day, cheered and illuminated by the shining of a summer sun; nor would it be dark, as if the sun were set or totally eclipsed; but it would continue a great mixture of truth and error, of holiness and sin, of happiness and misery. Yet it would form *one day*, and never be interrupted by a total night of darkness. It would also be *known unto the Lord*, as to the degree of its light and the term of its continuance; and He would watch over it, and take care of his cause and people during all the time of it. But his people could hardly know whether to call it day or night, or a compound of both; yet at length, towards the evening of the world, ‘the Sun of Righteousness’ would break forth, and shine with unclouded splendour, dispelling the gloom

* Zech. xiv. 6—9.

of ignorance, heresy, idolatry, and superstition, and illuminating the Church and the earth with knowledge, righteousness, peace, and consolation."* How truly does this prophetic picture represent the *past*, the *present*, and the *future* phases of the Gospel dispensation, and of the history of the Church of Christ, from its commencement in the apostolic days to its final consummation at the coming of the Redeemer in his glory. The representations made of the Gospel dispensation by the writers of the New Testament are in accordance with this; they uniformly speak of it, under similar terms, as "*the last days*," and point it out to us as God's *last* dispensation of mercy to the world—as *one continuous* period running onward, in various degrees of development and accomplishment to the end of the world. Thus the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews describes the Gospel dispensation as the *last* and *final* one:—"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in *these last days* (ἐπ' ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων) spoken unto us by his Son."† There had been the patriarchal period of revelation—the period under the Law, and that under the Prophets,—but this was the period for God's *last* revelation, and which was to remain, without being succeeded by another, to the close of the world. Many other passages in the New Testament require the same interpretation, and clearly

* Scott's "Commentary," *in loco*.

† Heb. i. 1, 2.

point to the dispensation of the Gospel as final and continuous to the end of the world.*

It is to be remarked, as corroborative of this view of the dispensation of the Gospel as one and final to the end of the world, that some of these glorious events foretold by prophets, and the fulfilment of which is by some regarded as *future*, and to be fulfilled under a *new* dispensation, are said already to have been fulfilled. We may here refer to the prophecy of Joel as to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the fulfilment of the prophecy as expressly declared by St. Peter on the day of Pentecost.† Some look upon the Pentecostal effusion but as the earnest or inchoate fulfilment of this promise of a glorious outpouring of the Spirit, which is immediately to precede and usher in the millennial glory of the Church. The Apostle, on the contrary, positively affirms the fulfilment of it on the day of Pentecost: "*This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel.*" On this subject an able writer forcibly remarks:—"The fulfilment which the prophecy received on the day of Pentecost was the proper and only intended fulfilment of it. We are not to take the *shower* that fell that day as *by itself* the thing intended. It is rather the *character* in which the Spirit was then given by the newly-ascended Saviour, conferred upon Himself immediately on his ascension, in reward of

* 1 Pet. i. 20; 2 Pet. iii. 3; 1 John ii. 18; Jude 18; Acts ii. 17.

† Joel ii. 28—32; Acts ii. 16—33.

what He had done on earth, and, as such, dispensed by Him immediately on the reception of it upon the Church. What was not withheld from the Church before, though given in anticipation of the work of Christ, was, now that that work was over, formally and openly conferred. It is in this light that the gift bestowed on the day of Pentecost is always spoken of in Scripture. 'Tarry ye,' said Jesus, 'in the city of Jerusalem, until *ye be endowed with power from on high.*' 'He commanded them that they should wait at Jerusalem *for the promise of the Father*, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.' '*The Holy Ghost was not given,*' says John, in the days of his flesh, 'because Jesus was not yet glorified.' 'Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence,' said the Saviour, just before his ascension. This continued *tying* of the gift of the Spirit, *as bestowed on the day of Pentecost*, to the ascension and glorification of Christ, makes it perfectly evident that we are *not to measure the gift that day vouchsafed to the Church by the actual extent of what the men then constituting the Church experienced.* It was the whole fulness of 'the Seven Spirits of God,' in the hand of the glorified Mediator, with which the Church was that day enriched. Hence the Gospel dispensation is called '*the ministration of the Spirit,*' now set free, as never before, to conduct the whole application of Christ's work in saving souls. If this be the scriptural view of what the Church received on the day of Pentecost, it follows, of course, that Joel's pro-

phesy received on the day of Pentecost all the fulfilment which it will ever receive. But this leaves room for the *development* of the blessing, as respects the *measure* of it enjoyed at any particular time or place, through all the successive ages of the Church. The Spirit is ever in Christ's hand, and by Christ in every instance directly conferred. In this sense it is said to be '*poured out*' at every time when it is received; but all such outpourings of the Spirit *are subordinate to, and but so many manifestations of, the glories of the Pentecostal day.* They each and all hold of that day, when the Spirit came first from the hands of the risen Saviour in contact with the Church. Instead of being but an *inchoate* effusion, that was the *primary*, all-commanding effusion, from which every subsequent effusion takes its character and its starting-point. And as we have ample room, on this view of Joel's prophecy, *for its running in through all time, till the whole endowment becomes matter of actual experience by all for whom it was designed*—if such a time shall ever come,—so have we room for all the particular measures in which a Sovereign Lord may see good to grant it in any given time or circumstances. We know from the history of the Church that there have been times when her fleece was lamentably dry, and times also when her root was spread out by the waters, and the dew lay all night upon her branch. And from what has been, we may naturally conjecture what shall be. But we are not left to conjecture,—‘When the (Antichristian)

enemy cometh in like a flood,' we are expressly told, '*the Spirit of the Lord* will lift up a standard against him;'^{*} and in the very next breath, the conversion of Israel is predicted (v. 20), so that remarkable event is in another prophecy announced as a result of a special effusion of the Spirit upon them.[†] And we have already seen that, 'until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high,' all will be a wilderness,—after that, like the garden of the Lord. [‡] And, once more, after Israel's conversion, the Spirit, whose copious effusions brought them to Christ, is to remain with them through all the generations of their existence.[§] Here, then, are several distinct and specific effusions of the Spirit, each of them signal and glorious, whether we consider the measure of it apparently denoted or the result of it. All this we are free to look for within the limits of that Pentecostal effusion, which was *the formal donation of the Spirit for all time, and the generic fulfilment of Joel's prophecy.*"||

All future effusions of the Holy Spirit—all the grace exhibited in the conversion of Jews and Gentiles—the progressive and ultimate triumphs of the Gospel and Kingdom of Christ, at whatever time or degree enjoyed, are to be regarded as so many manifestations and developments of God's purposes of mercy to be

^{*} Isa. lix. 19.

[†] Zech. xii. 10; xiii. 1.

[‡] Isa. xxxii. 15.

[§] Isa. lix. 21; Heb. viii. 10.

|| Dr. Brown on "Second Advent."

accomplished under the one final dispensation of the Gospel, introduced by the manifestation of Christ in the flesh, and inaugurated by his ascension to heaven and the effusion of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, which has been well called "*the permanent dowry of the Church of Christ.*" All those glorious events, predicted by Old and New Testament prophecy, are but successive manifestations and fulfilments of this last dispensation of God's mercy, which is running on to the end of time, and will issue in the unclouded and undecaying glories of that eternal state, when, according to the glowing vision of the Apocalyptic Seer, "the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the Lord God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." *

The Gospel, as "the ministration of the Spirit," is the great means ordained by God for the renovation of our fallen world. The Church, with its various appliances, is the living witness of God's purposes of mercy to the world, and the instrumentality of their accomplishment. Nothing essential to the Christian Church or its efficiency was left to "the will of man," to chance, or circumstances, any more than in the Jewish Church. In the Jewish Church the Divine command to Moses was, "Look that thou make all things after their *pattern*, which was shewed thee in the mount." † According to this Divine model the Jewish Church was founded; and this was developed in its

* Rev. xxi. 23.

† Exod. xxv. 40.

peculiar laws—in the facts of Jewish history—in types, prophecies, promises, and the teachings of the Prophets; and in the degree of their conformity or nonconformity to this Divine “pattern,” the Jewish Church flourished or decayed. So also is it with regard to the Christian Church. Its Divine type or pattern was exhibited, and its foundations deeply laid, in the ministry and work of the incarnate Redeemer—in the facts of Christianity recorded by the Evangelists—and in the doctrines preached by the Apostles. *It is according to the degree of conformity or nonconformity to this primitive and Divine model of Christianity, real religion in the world has, and will, prosper or decline.* It follows from this, that a clear understanding, and a deep conviction of the truth and import of the fundamental *facts* recorded in the Gospel narrative, should be sought for, that we may know “the certainty of those things,” which the Gospel requires us to believe, and which is the high office of the Church to witness to the world. This will explain why, in the former part of this work, the fundamental *facts* of Christianity are so prominently adduced and insisted on.

As in the corruptions, the divisions, the worldliness, and decay of real religion which prevailed for many ages in the Church, we see the awful consequences of *departure* from primitive and apostolic Christianity; so, in the *revival* and *return* of the Church to primitive Christianity, we have the only sure ground of hope of the ultimate triumphs of the Gospel over abounding

unbelief and ungodliness. Thus will be ushered in those more glorious and abiding "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord," which the "sure word of prophecy" warrants us to expect.

In pursuing the inquiry, in pointing out some of these "times of refreshing," vouchsafed by God to the Church in days of apostasy and darkness, and others yet to be anticipated, the author will probably be found to differ from some on certain points of *unfulfilled* prophecy and ecclesiastical polity. He by no means deprecates the study of *unfulfilled* prophecy; this would be to contravene the design of God in the prophetic revelation of future events for the encouragement and guidance of the faith of the Church. To understand, and rightly to interpret prophetic Scripture, is required higher qualifications and more extended knowledge of symbolic language, of history, chronology, geography, and of the primary sense, and connexions of certain passages, than many possess, who rush rashly into this field of inquiry. Prophecies, yet unaccomplished, are for the most part, and for obvious reasons, veiled in figurative and symbolic representations; yet the *events*, to which they point, are revealed as *certain*, and with that degree of clearness, to inspire faith and hope in their sure accomplishment. "It is not for you," said Christ, "to know the *times* and the *seasons* which the Father hath put in his own power." * It often happens to the Christian contemplating these sublimi-

* Acts i. 7.

ties of revelation, as to the traveller who gazes on the sublimities of nature. Yonder glorious range of Alpine mountains appears *near* ; to reach which many weary leagues must be travelled, and many hills climbed. As the traveller nears that glorious mountain range, new landscapes become revealed, which he saw not before, unfolding unexpected wonders and beauties to his gaze ; the character of the whole is diverse from what he imagined or expected. Thus it is with regard to *unfulfilled* prophecy, when the time of its accomplishment draws nigh. "God is his own interpreter, and He will make it plain." It becomes us to *believe* and *wait*. "In the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee." "I will stand upon my watch tower, and watch and see what He will say unto me—for the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie : though it tarry, wait for it ; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." *

As it regards ecclesiastical polity, there is abundant room for the exercise of mutual charity and forbearance among Christians, and the strongest motives for prayer that God will "inspire continually the universal Church with the Spirit of truth, unity, and concord,"—seeing every system of Church polity, in the framing and working of which imperfect humanity has to do,—will have its incongruities and imperfections. It is the duty, and will be the happiness of all Christians, more to regard what is *essential* than what is *circumstantial*

* Habakkuk ii. 1—3.

and *indifferent*. Instead of agitating the points of disagreement, which occasion bitterness and disunion, —“to follow after the things which make for peace,” —“to hold the faith in unity of Spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life.” Thus will be accomplished the prayer of the Redeemer,—“That they all may be *one*; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee; that they all may be *one* in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me!”*

* John xvii. 21.

CHAPTER II.

TIMES OF MESSIAH—THE GOSPEL DISPENSATION—"TIMES OF REFRESHING."

THIS phrase, "*times of refreshing*," contains a beautiful description of the times of Messiah, comprehending in them the entire dispensation of the Gospel from its commencement to its close at the glorious Second Advent of the Redeemer. This agrees with the cherished expectations of the Jews, who looked forward to the coming and reign of their Messiah as a period of repose from war and oppression, of great prosperity and glory to their nation, and of universal peace and blessedness to mankind. Understanding, as they did, the glowing descriptions of these times by their prophets, in a literal and worldly sense, we cease to wonder that they overlooked the spiritual glories of Messiah's reign, and fondly looked forward to times of national greatness and grandeur, when the lost glories of the days of David and Solomon would be restored to their Church and nation. The predictions of their prophets, like stars shining with brightening lustre in the dark nights of Jewish history, sustained the faith and hope of the faithful in Israel, in a coming deliverer, and of

better days ; these, like the devout Simeon, “waited for the consolation of Israel.” This expectation was not confined to the Jews, but had spread widely among the surrounding nations. The extended intercourse and commingling of the Jews with the Gentiles, their frequent dispersions, and with them of their sacred writings, will account for the latter fact. As the time of the Saviour’s advent drew nigh, the feeling of the *need* of some special Divine interposition for the enlightenment and regeneration of the world was all but universal, especially among the reflecting part of mankind. A slight and transient view of the state of the world, both Jewish and Gentile, strongly demonstrates the *necessity* of this. On all those great and essential points on which serious and reflecting minds pant for information, and which alone can impart satisfaction and comfort, as the existence and true character of a Supreme Being caring for man, and in whom man can confide ; the way of forgiveness and peace with God, whom he is conscious of having offended ; and the certainty of a life after death, the strong aspirations of which he feels within him ;—on all these and other important inquiries Grecian and Roman philosophy left the world in doubt and darkness. There was no power in the various systems of polytheism or philosophy, which prevailed over the Gentile world, to guide and sanctify the people ; but, on the contrary, the character of the “gods many,” the patrons and embodiments of vice and cruelty, and the prevailing and debasing

superstitions, increased and aggravated the general depravation of private and public morals, thus fully verifying the humiliating representation of Pagan morality and wretchedness sketched by the inspired apostle in his Epistle to the Romans.*

A modern writer, of great originality and power, selecting as his stand-point of view the time of Alexander Severus, the period of Roman history most remarkable for erudite intelligence, says,—“ At no time of the world’s history had erudite intelligence been spread over so large a surface, geographically, or had come, as one body of philosophy and literature, into the keeping of so large a number of persons as at the time whereat we have now made a pause. Take an earlier period, and then the West was redeemed from barbarism only at points ; or take a much later time, and the clouds of a sky overcast for a thousand years were gathering over both the West and the East ; or if we come down to more modern times, the vast regions of the East, with Africa and Egypt, are a howling wilderness, and the habitations of dragons. Whence, then, shall we furnish ourselves with the dark colours, by aid of which we are to recommend the brightness of the Gospel, then to make its way to supremacy ? The darkness which is to give us our intended contrast does not spring from barbarism, or from ignorance, or from intellectual slumber, but from *universal incertitude*, which was the characteristic of the times. It is the

* Rom. i. 19—31.

gloom of that moral dismay which comes upon cultured minds when they abandon in despair the long-cherished hope of seizing upon *truth* and *certainty*, of knowing something beside the theorems of Euclid, of grasping in the hand a stay immoveable. The soul reels and sickens when it turns hither and thither, vainly endeavouring to learn out of what chaos man had sprung, and into what abyss his destinies would plunge him.

“To disguise this despair, or to divert it, the levities of literature, and the endless inanities of criticism had been resorted to. For choking it Stoicism was the means employed. Yet, and notwithstanding the efforts of elaborate frivolity on the one part, and of a deathlike doctrine on the other, the comfortless dismay of the human mind, hopeless of *truth*, uttered itself in a moan, a low wailing, of which we may catch the echoes at whatever point we listen to the voice of that age. I am warranted in affirming that, thinking of the polytheistic and philosophic majority of the people, throughout the circle of Roman civilization a deeper gloom at this time covered the nations, and that the people sat ‘in the shadow of death.’ It would be easy to make good other allegations tending to show that this gloom was darkened by the overgrowing corruption of morals, by the utter decay of public spirit, by the dissoluteness which despotism encourages, and by the depravations of human emotions which came from the frequency and the sanguinary atrocity of the exhibitions of the amphi-

theatre. Grant me this, that, as the life of the soul, as to that brightness of assured belief, towards which human nature tends with so strong an instinct and so eager a craving, it was a season of dimness, and of more than darkness ; it was the most gloomy season in the history of mankind ; for all shadows were then lengthening and spreading, and a chill was in the atmosphere, foreboding a wintry night at hand. Throughout all the countries whereupon the once festive polytheism of Greece had built its altars mockery had supplanted religious awe, a factious fanaticism had come in the place both of gay observances and of serious feeling. Philosophy had uttered her last promises and broken them. On no side did light break forth." *

With the Jews—though the darkness and its consequences were less gross—the state of things was sad and humiliating. God, in mercy, with the view of enlightening and blessing the world, had made Judaism the depository of revealed truth. Philo truly remarked of the Jews, that “ to them was entrusted the prophetic office for all mankind, for it was *their* distinction, in opposition to the nations sunk in the worship of nature, to bear witness to the living God. The revelations and leadings of the Divine hand vouchsafed to them were designed for the whole human race, over which, from the foundation here laid, the kingdom of God was to be extended.” The coming of Messiah as the great

* “ Restoration of Belief,” by Isaac Taylor.

Prophet and Saviour of the world was the culminating point of Judaism, and its completion and fulfilment. This was the object to which all previous Divine revelations, prophecies, and expressive types, ceremonies and promises, constantly pointed. When the Jews proved unfaithful to the light imparted, and turned aside to idolatry, the revelations of their prophets became less frequent and less cheering: the truth they had received was perverted and corrupted; the Shekinah departed from the mercy-seat; the voice of God ceased to be heard in the temple; sacrifices became vain oblations; Jewish worship, with few exceptions, became a heartless display of ritualism and formalism; rabbinism, pharisaism, and infidel sadducism, permeated to a fearful extent Jewish society and religion; and "the commandments of man made void the commandments of God." Such was the state of things in the Jewish Church and nation when Messiah appeared. As had been foretold,—“the sceptre had departed from Judah”—Palestine had become a province of the mighty Roman Empire. Everywhere were exhibited the unmistakeable signs that “the glory was departed!”

This view of the state of the world, both Jewish and Gentile, at the time of Messiah's appearance, showing alike the forbearance of God and the condescension of the Saviour in his incarnation, demonstrates the need of those “times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord,” which were near at hand. The inspired apostle tells us that “when *the fulness of the time was come*

God sent forth his Son;” * intimating clearly the peculiar *fitness* of the time of Messiah’s appearance in the flesh. The time fixed by God for the accomplishment of his gracious purpose had arrived. Every system, whether of Judaism, polytheism, or philosophy, had fulfilled its time of trial. All the previous ages of the world, all the providential and historic movements and preparations of the world, had reached their culminating point, preparatory to the coming of the Saviour. Then, “in the *fulness* of the time,” “the kindness and philanthropy of God our Saviour towards man *appeared*.” † Neander, remarking on this phrase, “the fulness of the time,” observes, “Herein is certainly implied that the precise time when He appeared had some particular relation to his appearance; that the preparatory steps, through the previous development in the history of the nations, had been directed precisely to this point, and were destined to proceed just so far, in order to admit of this appearance, the goal and central point of all.” “The three great historical nations had to contribute, each in its own peculiar way, to prepare the soil for the planting of Christianity: the Jews on the side of the religious element; the Greeks on the side of science and art; the Romans, as masters of the world, on the side of the political element. When the fulness of the time was arrived, and Christ appeared—when the goal of history had thus been reached—then it was that through Him, and

* Gal. iv. 4.

† 1 Titus iii. 4.

the power of the Spirit that proceeded from Him, the might of Christianity, all the threads hitherto separated of human development were to be brought together and interwoven in one web. Now it was that the different courses of development, under revealed and in natural religion, under Judaism on the one hand, and Greek and Roman institutions on the other, co-operated to prepare the way for Christianity."

What blessed "times of refreshing" were those which the coming of Christ in the flesh ushered in upon our world! How welcome these times to Zacharias, and Simeon, and others who "waited for the consolation of Israel!" We wonder not that the father of the Baptist exclaimed, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us, in the house of his servant David; through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."* No wonder that the aged Simeon, "to whom it was revealed by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ," when his parents brought the infant Saviour into the Temple to be circumcised, took Him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all

* Luke ii. 68—70.

people : a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." * What "times of refreshing" had the days of the Saviour's personal ministry been to the Jews, had they but known and improved the day of their merciful visitation ! He appeared among them in "the glory of the only-begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth." In Him was embodied and manifested the attributes and the whole truth of God. The miracles of mercy and of power He wrought among them proclaimed his compassion and his divinity. How refreshing had been these times we may learn from his own words in the synagogue of Nazareth : "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor ; He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." † Even a slight glance at the records of the Saviour's life and ministry sufficiently confirms this view of the subject. "He went about doing good : " beneficence and love invested Him with a constant glory. By a word, He healed all manner of diseases. He dried the tears of the Widow of Nain, and of Mary and Martha, by raising those whom they mourned from the dead. Hear his words of comfort : "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"—"Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." To the penitent

* Luke ii. 26—31.

† Luke iv. 18, 19.

and contrite for sin He said, "The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sin"—"Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven"—"Go, and sin no more." 'Never man spake like this man' was the testimony of his enemies. He laid open the volume of nature, and, from the evidence it afforded of the goodness and providence of God, inculcated the delightful lessons of trust and confidence in that God as our "Heavenly Father," knowing all our wants, and ever ready to supply them. His teaching was designed and adapted to restore truth, which had been perverted and corrupted; to explain and bring to light what was obscure, and to declare truths before unknown, or not clearly revealed. He vindicated the spirituality of the Divine law, which had been lowered and degraded by the glosses and traditions of men; taught new, holy, and sublime motives of action; revealed the wondrous love of God to a guilty world; opening up to man, as a sinner, a new and living way of access to, and acceptance with, a sin-hating and offended God. He "brought life and immortality to light;" by his revelations of the future world he poured the light of immortal glories over the darkest shadows of death and the grave. Though thus "full of grace and truth," "He came unto his own, his own received Him not;" the great body of his nation, blinded by prejudice, and hardened in sin, rejected all his claims and the blessings of his salvation. In them was fulfilled the words of their own prophet, "To whom He said, This is the rest wherewith

ye may cause the weary to rest, and this is the *refreshing*; yet they would not hear.”* It was this guilty conduct which caused the Saviour to weep over Jerusalem, and say, “O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! how often would I have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!”† “If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.”‡ There were some, however, to whom these “days of the Son of man” proved “times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord,” who believed and rejoiced in Him as the promised Messiah and Saviour of the world. They shared largely in his love and compassion; they found in Him pardon for their sins, and rest for their souls; his presence and his doctrine were the joy and rejoicing of their hearts; they cheerfully forsook all to follow Him; they “beheld his glory as the only-begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth;” they were constrained to say, “Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us by the way, and opened unto us the Scriptures?” when others went away from Him, they said, “Lord, to whom can we go, but unto thee, for thou hast the words of eternal life?”

What has been remarked of the times of the Saviour’s personal appearance and ministry will equally apply to the whole of the dispensation of the Gospel. The times

* Isa. xxviii. 12.

† Matt. xxiii. 37.

‡ Luke xix. 42.

of the Gospel have been, and will to the end of the world be, "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord." "*Grace and truth*" are terms which truly characterize the Gospel dispensation. As a revelation of "*grace and truth*," it is adapted to the wants of the world. Christianity is not only in agreement, as Origen remarks, "with the common notions of man from the beginning," it meets and fulfils all the wants and expectations of man. Our statements here must be brief. Every system of religious belief which has prevailed in the world embraces the *consciousness* of the existence of God—a feeling of sinfulness—the need and desire of reconciliation—the want of a mediator—and a future state after death. In the Gospel, *truth* and *certainty* alone are found on all these important particulars. Every previous system of religion and of philosophy had aimed to meet the wants and desires of mankind in these important inquiries, and had failed. The Gospel assumes the common belief of the existence of God, and clearly reveals the character of God, especially under the ideas, unknown to any previous system, as a Being of mercy and love, as caring for man, as "waiting to be gracious," and "rich in mercy to all who call upon Him." The consciousness of sinfulness, of exposure to the anger of God in consequence of sin, and of the necessity of reconciliation, must have been felt by mankind of every age. As has been well observed, "Never has the mind of man, driven to construct a worship from its natural resources, invented a religion

of despair. It has sought, in prayer and sacrifice, to return again to Him to whom it feels that it is related, and whom it would fain call once more, 'Abba, Father!' In sacrifices, it has sought atonement, and in prayer, reconciliation." Closely connected with this has been the universal feeling of the necessity of a mediator between an offended God and his sinful creatures. "Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die," * was the language of the Jews, awed by the signs they had of the majesty and holiness of Jehovah. This was the expression of the feeling, deeply rooted in human nature universally, of the necessity of a mediator to stand between, to reconcile a holy God and his sinful creatures. We recognise this feeling in all the inventions of Paganism, and in the multiplied mediators of Romanism. The Gospel alone points to the needed and all-sufficient Mediator: "There is *one* Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." † Truth says, You must have a Mediator. The word of the truth of the Gospel says, You must not only have a Mediator, but you must also learn that there is *One* who spans, as it were, the whole arch, who is *Himself* the arch between a holy God and sinful human nature. He is one with Jehovah, and He is one with us—"the God-man, Christ Jesus!" The same may be said with reference to the consciousness of a future state after death. The feeling and desire of immortality is deeply rooted in

* Ex. xx. 19.

† 1 Tim. ii. 5.

human nature ; the natural and universal aspiration of the human mind towards it in every age has been considered presumptive evidence of its certainty. But all the belief of the world, with the single exception of the Jews—all the light of philosophy, left mankind in darkness, doubt, and uncertainty on this all-important subject of anxious inquiry. “Light and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel.” Here alone, in the teachings of Christ and his apostles, are revealed in clearness, and confirmed by his resurrection and ascension to heaven, and by his precious promises and awful threatenings, the certainty of a future state ; and, according as their lives were in this world, the future destinies of all mankind, their resurrection from the dead, and their bliss or woe through eternity. The Gospel of Christ alone meets every want, solves all difficulties, commends itself to the universal reason, wants, and desires of mankind. It has in itself a witness that convinces and satisfies in all these respects. How must this have been felt wherever the Gospel came ! What new light, refreshment, and life were the happy results of it wherever the Gospel was received !—there were realized “times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.”

In the life of Christ set forth in the Gospel as the Mediator and Saviour of the world, we behold Christianity embodied and exemplified in the highest perfection. In his *example*, we have the law and the Gospel “drawn out in living characters.” If, according to the truism, example is more efficacious than precept, the

exhibition which the Gospel gives of the character of Christ, wherever received and influential, must prove renovating and sanctifying to those who believe it. It is the design of God, and this is the end of Christianity, that we be "conformed to the image of his Son." * Conformity to Christ is the standard of Christian excellence set up by the Gospel. What the degree of moral excellence was that was possessed by man before the Fall we can know but imperfectly. Of this much we may be certain, that all in which it consisted, and in superior glory, is realized and set forth in the character and example of the Saviour. In Him is restored the lost glory of humanity. The example of Christ *in our nature*, from this view of it, acquires a character of intense importance and efficacy on all who believe the Gospel. This is too much overlooked by us. We are too much accustomed too exclusively to fix attention on Christ as the *Divine Saviour*, and on the benefits of his redemption, and too feebly to regard the *example* He has left us in his life for our imitation. The Gospel insists on likeness to Him as the only sure evidence of interest in Him—as the only sure way to joy and comfort in Him. This shows us the love and wisdom of God, as manifested in the assumption of our nature into union with his Divine nature by Christ in order to accomplish our redemption, and also in the various conditions and circumstances of humanity through which the Saviour passed in his state of humiliation, of childhood and man-

* Rom. viii. 29.

hood, of poverty and disgrace, of joy and sorrow, of suffering and dying, to show his fellowship and sympathy with us in like circumstances, as also to exhibit for our imitation those moral excellencies which it is our duty to imitate, and in which consists the true glory of humanity, and the reality and excellence of that Christian character which the Gospel requires. It is in the degree that such a character is manifested and spreads through the world, the world will be renovated, refreshed, and sanctified. Oh ! what a time of refreshing will it be to the world, when all who profess love to the Saviour are thus living representatives of Him ; when there shall be presented to the world, not the mere dogmas and symbols of Christianity, but, in the lives of its professors, the bright and efficacious reflection of those moral excellencies which shone forth in the Saviour's life in peerless and unclouded glory. What a demonstration of the divinity and truth of the Gospel was the life of Christ to mankind at the commencement of the Gospel dispensation, when those who preached it to the world could appeal to the lives of Christians in proof of it. It is in the degree in which this conformity to the life of Christ is exhibited the Gospel dispensation will be seen and felt, as ushering in "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord."

CHAPTER III.

TIMES OF MESSIAH—THE GOSPEL DISPENSATION—"TIMES OF REFRESHING."

THE example of Christ is one of the great attractions and motive powers of the Gospel for the refreshment and renovation of the world. This may with equal truth be affirmed of *the sublime morality* taught by Christ and the first preachers of the Gospel. There existed at the commencement of the Gospel dispensation, both among Jews and Gentiles, a low and perverted state of morals. We have only to read the writings of the most celebrated historians, philosophers, and poets of Greece and Rome for proof of this. The picture drawn by the apostle of Pagan morality, and it was that of the great mass of mankind, is painfully graphic and true:—"Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents; without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful." *

* Rom. i. 29—31.

of a people is to be judged from the character of the gods they worship, this painful picture of pagan morality will excite no surprise, for the gods they worshipped were the embodiments and patrons of cruelty, of lust, and of all licentiousness. If, as is true, all national greatness depends on the tone of public feeling and manners, and this again on the power of religion professed by them, in the life of the people, we cease to wonder at the universal immorality, misery, and debasement of the pagan world. With some modifications, a low and perverted state of morals also prevailed among the Jews. How new, refreshing, sanctifying, and elevating must have proved to Jew and Gentile the preaching of the pure and sublime morality of the Gospel! It was refreshing as the showers of heaven to the withered and parched glebe: it was as life from the dead; it caused the moral wilderness to rejoice and blossom as the rose. The morality of the two tables of the Decalogue, which remained and was ready to die, is in the Gospel renovated, strengthened, and exalted. Moral duties derive new power and dignity from the peculiar principles and motives by which the Gospel enforces them. The following, among others, will show the truth of this:—"Be ye holy, *for I am holy.*" "Be *imitators of God*, as dear children." "Let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven." "Submitting yourselves to one another *in the fear of God.*" "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own

husbands, *as unto the Lord.*" "Husbands, love your wives, *even as Christ loved the Church.*" "Children, obey your parents *in the Lord, for this is right.*" "Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, *but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*" "Servants, be obedient unto them that are your masters, in singleness of heart, *as unto Christ*; not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart." "Love one another, *as I have loved you.*" "Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous; not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise, blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile. Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." "It is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing, than for evil-doing; *for Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.*" "I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you; *that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth his rain on*

the just and on the unjust." "Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; *for this is the law and the prophets.*" "Ye are bought with a price: *therefore* glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, *which are God's.*" If the true character and worth of the action or duty is to be estimated by the principle and motive urging to its performance, how surpassing in purity and dignity is the morality which the Gospel inculcates and secures! and how influential must it have proved on the minds and conduct of those to whom it was preached, and by whom it was received! What dignity and vitality do these relative and moral duties, inculcated in the passages already quoted, derive from the sublime motives by which they are enforced! How lifeless and powerless is all morality, whether Pagan or nominally Christian, when contrasted with the pure and efficacious morality of the Gospel!

How great and surprising to the world, both Jewish and Gentile, but especially to the latter, must have been those moral transformations which the Gospel wrought in the views and conduct of those who embraced it! As it began to spread, and to tell on the hearts and minds of men, and to permeate society, it was like the breaking forth of a moral spring; in the beautiful and figurative language of the prophet: "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree; and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle-tree; and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting

sign, that shall not be cut off."* The great change effected in the minds and conduct of those who embraced the Gospel must have been more marked in the early days of Christianity than in modern times of general profession. The first Christians had to renounce the worship of idols, and to abjure with it all idolatrous and Pagan rites, habits, and vices; and this would make them marked men, and affect them in all the relations of life and of society. "Their absence from idolatrous temples and altars," it is remarked, "as a matter of course, would be obvious; indeed, matter of such notoriety was it, as to awake the anxious attention of the chief magistrates, who saw with alarm the revenues of the shrines, which were farmed by the Government to the highest bidder, like our toll-bars, rapidly decline under the large defection of the Christians;—the Christians would be noticed as altogether withdrawing themselves from the theatre, the stadium, and the arena." It is impossible to read evidence of this kind, of the incongruity which subsisted between the manners, feelings, tastes of the Christians and heathen—and such evidence abounds—without being satisfied that the curiosity excited by the mysterious peculiarities of the new sect was intense, and must have been instrumental, in a great degree, in spreading throughout the world a knowledge of the distinctive doctrines of the Gospel and the characteristics of the Church. There was another circumstance

* Isa. lv. 13.

which, in the same indirect way, proved a very effective trumpet to sound the alarm of the new religion, and that was the persecution the Christians were compelled to undergo on account of their confession. The heathen could not stand by and witness the heroic constancy with which multitudes of both sexes and of all ages took their death, without being struck by the spectacle, without being led to investigate the nature of a principle which imparted such extraordinary force, self-possession, and endurance of pain to those who were animated with it. We are in possession of some graphic accounts of the remarks made by some heathen bystanders on these scenes—remarks which, says Cyprian, who records them, “forcibly inspired him with the thought, that there was something wonderfully affecting, wonderfully majestic, in the sight of anguish borne without a flinch. The man has children, I believe—a wife he has, for certain—and yet he is not unnerved by those ties of flesh and blood; he is not turned from his purpose by these claims of affection. We must look into the affair, we must get at the root of it.” Accordingly, Justin Martyr tells us that “this constancy of the Christians under the severest trials was a circumstance which predisposed him to regard their creed with favour; and, though himself at that time devoted to the doctrines of Plato, and in the habit of hearing the Christians denounced, yet, when he saw them unmoved by death, and by every other ordinary terror, he felt that it was impossible such persons could

be leading a life of voluptuousness and sin, as they were said to do.” *

The same writer observes :—“ It is not the force of the miracles of which we read in the Gospel, stupendous as they are ; nor yet the predictions which we there find accomplished to the minutest nicety, that produces, even now, perhaps, the strongest conviction of the truths they vouch for ; but it is the wholesome morality which breathes in every page of it—the manner of spirit it is of—the simple, touching, unaffected terms in which it teaches purity, charity, patience, meekness, temperance—insomuch, that, having followed the apostle Paul, for instance, through the argumentative portion of one of his epistles—that to the Romans, perhaps, or that to the Ephesians—and having felt and admired the power of his reasoning, we find our conviction of his Divine commission growing stronger and stronger as we encounter the cluster of just and righteous precepts with which he usually winds up ; and as he proceeds, without order or arrangement, to exclaim, ‘ Let love be without dissimulation ; abhor that which is evil ; cleave to that which is good ; be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love ; in honour preferring one another ; not slothful in business ; fervent in spirit ; serving the Lord ; rejoicing in hope ; patient in tribulation ; continuing instant in prayer ; distributing to the necessity of saints ; given to hospitality ; ’ with a profusion of other maxims

* “ History of Christian Church,” by Rev. J. J. Blunt, B.D.

equally calculated to secure the happiness and peace of all who listen to them—we instinctively say, ‘God is in him of a truth—what further need we of witness?’”

The remarks of Neander are too important to be omitted here. He says:—“What in the first place particularly served to make possible and to facilitate the introduction of such a religion everywhere, was its own peculiar character, as one raised above every kind of outward, sensible form, and hence capable of entering into all the existing forms of human society, since it was not its aim to found a kingdom of this world.” How Christianity could adapt itself to all earthly relations, and, while it allowed men still to remain in them, yet, by the new spirit which it gave them—the Divine life which it breathed into them, how it was enabled to raise men above these relations, is distinctly set before us by a Christian living in the early part of the second century, who thus describes his contemporaries:—“The Christians are not separated from other men by earthly abode, by language, or by customs. They dwell nowhere in cities by themselves, they do not use a different language, or affect a singular mode of life. They dwell in the cities of the Greeks and of the Barbarians, each as his lot has been cast; and, while they conform to the usages of the country in respect to dress, food, and other things pertaining to the outward life, they yet show a peculiarity of conduct wonderful and striking to all. They obey the existing laws, and conquer the laws by their own living.”

“ But the same loftier spirit, which could merge itself in all the forms it found at hand, must yet, while it coalesced with all the *purely human*, come into conflict with all the *ungodly* nature of mankind, with whatever issued from it, and was connected with it. It announced itself as a power aiming at *the renovation of the world*; and the world sought to maintain itself in its old ungodly character. Hence the necessary collision with the prevailing modes of thinking and manners. Christianity could find entrance everywhere, precisely because it was the religion of God’s sovereignty in the heart, and excluded from itself every political element; but to the fundamental position of the old world, which Christianity was to overthrow, belonged religion as an institution of the State. The Pagan religion, as such, was so closely interwoven with the entire civil and social life, that, whatever attacked the one, must soon be brought into conflict also with the other. The conflict might, in many cases at least, have been avoided, if the early Church, like that of later times, had been inclined to accommodate itself to the world more than the holiness of Christianity allowed, and to secularize itself, in order to gain the world as a mass. But with the primitive Christians this was not the case; they were much more inclined to a stern repulsion of everything that pertained to Paganism, even of that which had but a seeming connexion with it, than to any sort of lax accommodation; and assuredly, it was at that period far more wholesome, and better adapted to preserve the

purity of Christian doctrine and of the Christian life, to go to an extreme in the first of these ways than in the last."

Thus, according to the Saviour's parable, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened,"* the holy and transforming leaven of Christianity thus cast into the great mass of humanity, has been, and will continue to the end of the world, to permeate society, to regulate and improve all the institutions of society, to ameliorate and sanctify mankind.

"The story of the Gospel must ever gain the ear of the poor and the wretched so long as the sound of sympathy is ever dear to the aching human heart. It is a story of One who mixed with men in all their conditions and tempers, dealing tenderly with all; of One who preached good tidings to the meek, and bound up the broken-hearted, and proclaimed liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, and gave to them that mourned in Zion beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; of One who, in spite of all good works, was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, until He made his grave with the wicked; of One who was highly exalted of God, and whose name is raised above every name. Even if the secret aids of grace and the Spirit were put aside, there would be a natural

* Matt. xiii. 33.

influence in such a record, that none but the very hardened could resist. It is the strength of our religion that our High Priest is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and has set us the example of overcoming them. No one wonders that Christianity has raised, and is raising, the humble human person into a respect unknown so long as man's pride and strength gave laws; for the Divine mission of Christ began among the humble, and conquered princes and emperors last. The care for sickness and suffering is but natural in following One who proved himself to be God and Lord by miracles wrought to remove such evils. The consolations that we offer to the unhappy—the worth of which can be known to the unhappy alone—acquire their reality from their connexion with Him who suffered to save the world. But, if the Gospel finds its way among the wretched and humble, because of a kindred element in it with which they can sympathize, the consequence is plain, that it cannot find entrance into minds whose prevailing mood is pride and foolishness. If Christ had been only a more glorious Solomon, or a better Herod, He could not have been the friend of the captive, or the guide of the penitent. But now He is the humble Son of man, preaching a Gospel of self-denial during a life of many sorrows; and *we* try to reign as kings without Him, throned on our own self-esteem, carefully exacting the tribute of the regard of others, and turning life into a feast and rejoicing. And who can wonder that we miss the drift

of the Divine message that the cross of Christ suggests to us neither Divine power nor Divine wisdom ?

“There has been in the doctrine of Redemption an efficacy that has surprised even those that have administered it. Go forth, it might be said to one who had undertaken to win souls for Christ, and preach the whole truth without distrust. You may not see how the news that Jesus loved and suffered is to enter into and vehemently move the souls you try to instruct ; but for well nigh 2,000 years has the cross of Christ been lifted up, and has been drawing all men unto it. In every congregation, though the attrition of custom seems to have rounded all men into the same outward manner almost like the twinned pebbles in the brook, there are many secret influences at work, and for each does the news of Christ provide some food or medicine. There is the yearning of affection, and the heartache of baffled hope, the irritation of sickness, the decay of manly strength, the fear of the end. Bid them know that their Redeemer liveth ; tell them that one who is the resurrection and the life compasses them about already with the cords of sympathy, and will never forsake them. And you will wonder at the tenacious grasp with which those will embrace the cross who have no other hope ; you will see that so long as we teach all things that He has commanded he is with us always unto the end of the world.” *

Closely connected with the former views of Chris-

* Thompson's “Bampton Lecture.”

tianity, it is important to remark, that it recognises and appeals to man as a free and intellectual being. Every system of Paganism, and indeed of false or corrupt religion, overlooks these important prerogatives of man and depresses them. Instead of consulting the freedom and independence of the mind of man, such systems, which are everywhere characterised as systems of *power* and not of *thought*, required the blind and unhesitating submission of the mind without the intelligent assent of the understanding and the heart. The Gospel, on the contrary, is "the law of liberty,"—it emancipates and proclaims the spiritual freedom of the mind of man. It invites to an investigation of its claims; it appeals to the intellect as well as to the heart; its language is, "I speak as unto wise men, judge ye what I say." And wherever it is received the effect is to liberate from moral, intellectual, and political bondage. In truth, it may be said, that Christianity, in the first preaching of it by the apostles to the nations, had almost to create an *intellect* as well as a *conscience*. And such is the case now with Christian missionaries who go to the heathen. The effects of the Gospel in enlightening the conscience and elevating the intellect show that it is one of the greatest blessings which God has ever vouchsafed to the world.

Many schemes and systems have been suggested for the moral renovation and melioration of the world; but the Gospel has been found the only one which possesses a character of adaptation and power to this end. That

alone can change and sanctify the *world*, which has power to change and sanctify the *heart* of man. By its direct and indirect influence, its action and reaction, it diminishes and destroys those evils which afflict and degrade humanity ; it gives existence and power to that true love, sympathy, and compassion, which impel to the relief of physical and moral wretchedness wherever it is found ; it opens up unfailing springs of consolation and hope to sweeten and mitigate all human sorrow. By the renovation and sanctification of hearts it spreads abroad purity and happiness. It brings man into fellowship with God, and unites man to man in the fellowship of Christian love. It will put an end to oppression, slavery, and war, by securing and advancing the reign of righteousness and peace. In one word, its predicted and universal triumph will restore to our fallen world the harmony and bliss of Paradise, lost and forfeited by the sin of man. What words, then, could more fitly or expressively have been used by the apostle to set forth the blessings of the Gospel dispensation from its commencement to its close, than these, "*times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord*" ? To some of these "times of refreshing" we shall direct our attention. "*Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.*"

CHAPTER IV.

"TIMES OF REFRESHING" AT THE RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION OF CHRIST.

"TIMES of refreshing" must truly have been the happy season of personal intercourse which the disciples enjoyed with their incarnate Lord. "The good Shepherd" made his "little flock" "lie down in green pastures, and led them beside the still waters; He restored their souls and led them in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake."* He cheered them by his presence; instructed them in infinite wisdom; protected them; supplied their wants; and comforted them under all their sorrows. What proofs had they of his love and all-sufficiency in the gracious promises He gave them, and in the miracles of power and benevolence which He wrought in their presence—feeding multitudes in the wilderness, healing all manner of diseases, giving sight to the blind, and raising the dead to life? What might they not expect of blessing from the presence, the love, and power of such a friend! How painful and disappointing to them must have been the intimations, often repeated, and with greater clear-

* Ps. xxiii. 2, 3.

ness as the time drew nigh, of his separation from them, of his approaching sufferings and death ! When assembled with Him, in the upper room, where He kept with them the last passover, how must it have affected them to hear him say, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you *before I suffer* ;" * and when afterward, instituting the Lord's Supper, "He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my Body, which is given for you ; this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood, *which is shed for you* ;" † and especially when He announced to them that one of their number would betray Him into the hands of his enemies, and that they all would abandon Him in the time of his sufferings ! What must have been their confusion and agony when going forth from Gethsemane they beheld their Lord basely betrayed by Judas, bound and led away as a criminal to the hall of judgment, and heard that He was condemned to be crucified ! That day of unusual bustle, excitement, and triumph in Jerusalem, when He was led forth through the gates to be crucified, must to them have been one of unspeakable agony. When the tidings that He was *dead* reached them in their hiding place, such an announcement must have been to them the death of all their fondly-cherished expectations. In that grave, where was laid the dead body of Jesus, is buried all

* Luke xxii. 15.

† Luke xxii. 19, 20.

their hope and joy. What must have been the intensity and magnitude of their sorrow and despondency comprehended in the brief interval between the Saviour's death and resurrection! But He had told them, what, however, they appear to have forgotten, that this their night of sorrow was soon to be turned into a bright morning of joy and gladness by his rising from the dead. "Ye now have sorrow; *but I will see you again*, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." "A little while and ye shall not see me; and again, *a little while and ye shall see me.*"* The resurrection of Christ must indeed have been to them a "time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord." Their hope, like Aaron's withered rod, brought forth buds, blossoms, and fruit. We mark this effect in the words of St. Peter: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, *hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*"†

The Resurrection of Christ is the great demonstration of the truth of Christianity. On this foundation rests the whole superstructure of Christianity. Let this be subverted and the whole fabric becomes a splendid ruin. To the Jews, who with marvellous incredulity had rejected all the evidence of his miracles, and who had asked of Him a sign from heaven that He was the Christ, the Saviour had foretold his resurrection from the dead as the only sign which should be

* John xvi. 19, 22.

† 1 Pet. i. 3.

given them of the divinity of his mission and claims. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up: this spake He of the temple of his Body."* Again, when a like demand was made on Him for a *sign*: "There shall no sign be given, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly: so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."† The point of analogy here is not between Jonah and Christ, as if Jonah had been the type of Christ, but between what may be called the resurrection of Jonah and that of the Saviour. In both cases it was the sign and demonstration of a Divine mission and of the truth of the message. In the case of Jonah, we see how conclusive this evidence proved. In the storm he had been cast into the sea, and in the sight of the crew had been swallowed up by the fish, and the storm had at once ceased! There was what was supernatural in all this, by which the minds of the mariners of Tarsus would be deeply impressed—"What manner of man is this?" It would be an event to be talked about and be spread abroad. When, therefore, Jonah, thus miraculously preserved and delivered, appeared among men, what a sign would it be to them to whom he was sent, that he was a prophet sent by God, and that his message was "a message from God." Thus the Saviour appealed to his resurrection as the evidence, "the sign," of his Divine mission. His rising again

* John ii. 19, 21.

† Matt. xii. 39, 40.

from the dead the effect of his own Divine power ; his appearance to competent witnesses as “ alive from the dead ” would be to the Jews and the world the demonstration that He was what He claimed to be,—the Messiah, the Son of God, the Saviour. The Jewish rulers, who affected to regard Him as a *deceiver*, felt and acknowledged the force of such evidence by the efforts they made to frustrate and falsify it. The wisdom of God is to be marked in the providential circumstances which had the direct effect of exposing the folly of all their contrivances. The oblivion, on the part of the disciples, of the prediction of Christ, that he would rise again, their inexpectancy of it, show that they had no hope of it. The visit of certain of their number to the sepulchre to *embalm* the body of Jesus showed their belief that it was to continue in the grave. The incredulity they manifested when some of their company announced that He had risen shows the same. All this is inconsistent with and opposed to what the Jewish rulers alleged, of an attempt on the part of the disciples to *steal* the body from the sepulchre, and saying that He was risen from the dead. The more narrowly the contrivance of the Jewish rulers to hinder and falsify the resurrection is examined the more do we see the providence of God overruling all that occurred for the establishment of the truth of it. We mark this in the important fact of Joseph of Arimathea asking for and obtaining the body of Jesus, and burying it in a *new* sepulchre, “ wherein never man before was

laid.”* Had other bodies been placed in that tomb before, how easy had it been for the Jews to have said it was not the body of Jesus, but another that had been abstracted or risen. Then again, when we look at the precautions of the Jews to hinder his resurrection: “The chief priests and Pharisees came to Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that *deceiver* said, while He was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.”† But vain are all their efforts! There is security and triumph among the Saviour’s enemies in the city. Sorrow and despondency with his disciples in their hiding place. A Roman guard watches the sepulchre. How soon the scene is changed! “Behold, there was a great earthquake; for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone from the door and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men: and the angel answered and said unto the women,” who had arrived at that moment to embalm the body, “Fear not *ye*;

* Luke xxiii. 53.

† Matt. xxvii. 62—66.

for I know that ye seek Jesus. He is not here; for He has risen as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay." * The affrighted guards hastened to the city, "and showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we slept. And if this come to the Governor's ears we will persuade him and secure you. So they took the money and did as they were taught; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day." † Such a story carries with it its own refutation. "This account of the Jews," says one, "is attended with the following difficulties and absurdities. The Roman guard was composed usually of sixty men, and they were stationed there for the express purpose of guarding the body of Jesus. The punishment of *sleeping* while on guard in the Roman army was *death*, and it is perfectly incredible that they should expose themselves in this manner to death. The disciples were few in number, unarmed, weak, and timid. They had just fled before those who took Jesus in the garden, and how can it be believed that in so short a time they would dare to *attempt* to take away from a Roman guard of armed men what they were expressly set to defend? How could the disciples presume that they would find them asleep; or, if they should, how was it

* Matt. xxviii. 2—6.

† Matt. xxviii. 11—14.

possible to remove the stone or the body without awakening one of their number? If the soldiers were *asleep*, how did they, or how could they know, that the disciples stole the body away? If they were *awake*, why did they suffer it? The whole account, therefore, is intrinsically absurd. 'On the other hand, the account given by the disciples was perfectly natural.' He appeared to them after his resurrection again and again: no fewer than eleven or twelve appearances to them of their risen Lord are recorded in their narratives. They had the fullest proof of his *identity*; "they affirmed that they saw Him—all the apostles affirmed this, and many others: they affirmed it in Jerusalem, in the presence of the Jews, before the High Priest and the people. If the Jews really believed the account which they themselves had given, why did they not apprehend the apostles and *prove* them guilty of the theft and of falsehood? things which they never attempted, and which show, therefore, that they did not credit their own report. In regard to the Saviour, the apostles could not be deceived. They had been with Him three years. They knew Him as a friend. They again eat and drank with Him; they put their fingers into his hands and side; they were with Him forty days. There were *enough* of them to bear witness. Law commonly requires not more than one or two competent witnesses, but here were *twelve* plain, honest men, who affirmed in all places, and at all times, that they had seen Him. Can it be possible that they could be deceived? Then

all faith in testimony must be given up. They gave every possible evidence of their sincerity. They were persecuted, ridiculed, scourged, and put to death for affirming this. Yet not one of them ever expressed the least doubt of its truth. They bore everything rather than deny that they had seen Him. They had no motive in doing this but the love of truth. They obtained no wealth by it, no honour, no pleasure. They gave themselves up to great and unparalleled sufferings—going from land to land, crossing almost every sea, and enduring the dangers, toils, and privations of almost every clime, for the simple object of affirming everywhere that a Saviour died and rose. If they knew that this was an imposition—and if it had been, they would have known it—in what way is this remarkable conduct to be accounted for? Do men conduct themselves in this way for nought,—and especially in a plain case, where all that can be required is the testimony of the senses? The world believed them. Three thousand of the Jews themselves believed in the risen Saviour on the day of Pentecost, but fifty days after his resurrection.* Multitudes of other Jews believed during the lives of the Apostles. Thousands of Gentiles believed also; and in three hundred years the belief that Jesus rose had spread over and changed the whole Roman Empire. *Had* the Apostles been deceivers, that was the age in which they could most easily have been detected. Yet *that* was the age when converts were

* Acts ii. 41.

most rapidly multiplied, and God affixed his seal to their testimony that it was true." *

What blessed "times of refreshing" the disciples realized in the company of their risen Lord, we may learn from the records they have left us of his appearances to them after his resurrection. "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." The joy of the fond sisters of Lazarus in having again with them their brother, "alive from the dead," will convey to us a faint idea of the joy of the disciples. What a renovation of hope must this have been to Peter, who had denied his Lord! His case, and for this special reason, is particularly marked on this occasion. From the moment when, conscience-smitten, he rushed from the hall of judgment, and went forth weeping bitterly, his feelings may be easily imagined. How unworthy had he proved himself of the love of his Lord, and of the name of a disciple. With what suspicion would the rest of the Apostles look upon him? Even had there remained in his bosom the lingering hope, that Christ, as He had said, would "see them again," could he anticipate it with joy? Would he not rather fear that his Lord, whom he had denied, would disown and reject him? How great, then, the mercy and love of the risen Saviour in his first appearance to the women at the sepulchre, in the special mention of the name of Peter in his first message to his disciples, "Go and tell my disciples, *and Peter*, that I am risen!" It was as if

* Barnes.

He had said, "Peter has denied me, let him know that I do not disown him. I have not cast him out of my affections; let him be assured that I remember him, that I forgive him, and still love him!" What a healing balm must such a message have been to the wounded spirit of the sorrowing and penitent Peter! And when afterwards the Saviour tested his love, and restored him to his office, of which he doubtless felt himself unworthy, commanding him to "feed his sheep," to "feed his lambs," what a time of joy and refreshing to him! Well might he describe the effect of this on his own mind, as on the minds also of the rest of the Apostles, by saying, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy, *hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*" Such, also, must have been the effect of the risen Saviour's appearance to and converse with the two disciples on their way to Emmaus. As they walked and talked by the way, and were sad, "Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them; but their eyes were holden, that they should not know Him." What must have been their surprise and delight when He said to them, "O fools and slow of heart, to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." And when afterwards in their company,

“He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them”—by this significant act reminding them of his last supper with them, and they thus knew that it was “*the Lord*, and He vanished out of their sight,”—what a “time of refreshing” was this to them! No wonder that they said one to another, “Did not our heart burn within us while he talked unto us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?” Full of joy, and anxious to make it known to the rest of the disciples, “they rose up the same hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.”* Again, and again, did the risen Saviour manifest himself to his disciples, speaking words of peace and love to them, “shewing himself alive to them, after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.”† We may be sure from this brief record, as we learn from the Evangelical narratives, that these reiterated opportunities of converse with their risen Lord were precious seasons of refreshment and instruction to the disciples. We gather from the narrative, that the Saviour on these occasions explained to them the nature, the necessity, and design of his mission and mysterious sufferings. He told them of the glorious

* Luke xxiv. 13—34.

† Acts i. 3.

results of his redeeming love to the world at large. He commanded them as his chosen witnesses to preach his Gospel of mercy in all the world. And to convince them that the Jews who had rejected and crucified Him were not excluded from his mercy, He commands them to "begin" their ministry of reconciliation "at Jerusalem." He imparted to them the Holy Ghost, to qualify them for their mission. To assure them that they would not be unaided and unblest in their work, He told them of his glory,—that "all power was given unto him in heaven and in earth,"—that his presence would be with them and with their successors "to the end of the world." He would, doubtless, also tell them of the glory to which He was about to be exalted at the right hand of God, as also of the future glories of his spiritual kingdom in this world, everywhere to be established by the preaching of the Gospel. At his last meeting, "He commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father:" "Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." *

Thus enlightened in the knowledge of the great mysteries of redemption, refreshed and confirmed in faith and love, they meet their risen Lord for the last time at Jerusalem. "He led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was

* Acts i. 4; Luke xxiv. 49.

parted from them, and carried up into heaven.”* We must linger awhile and contemplate this glorious scene. *Bethany*, or Mount Olivet, where this took place, was a memorable spot. Often had Jesus retired to this secluded spot with his disciples, and thither He now for the last time conducts them. It was from hence, or near this, He had made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and had endured that unparalleled agony of soul when “his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”† Here He was betrayed and forsaken by his disciples, and led away by his enemies to judgment and to death. To this memorable locality Christ now led his disciples, that the place of so much humiliation and suffering to Him might be the scene of his glory. His last act was to bless them. While they gaze on their Lord, and listen with joy to those unspeakable words of blessing which He pronounced, “He was parted from them.” They beheld Him gradually leaving the earth and ascending up towards heaven. They see Him ascend in his risen body in which He had conversed with them, most likely all at once transfigured and glorious as it appeared at the Transfiguration, gilding as the setting sun does the clouds with its glories. They watch his ascension, till “a cloud received him out of their sight.” Still they gaze upward, and hope the cloud will pass away, that they may see once more their beloved Lord. “And while they looked stedfastly

* Luke xxiv. 50, 51.

† Luke xxii. 44.

towards heaven as he went up, behold, two angels stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." * What a "time of refreshing" must have proved to them this glorious ascension of their Lord to heaven! It must, if aught of that yet remained, have removed for ever all their doubts and fears as to his character and claims. That He left them in the act of *blessing* them, would be to them a delightful assurance of his full forgiveness and love. How would the full force and meaning of the promise He had given them now strike them—"I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am ye may be also." † With what confidence and raised hopes would they look for the fulfilment of his words—"It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; *but if I depart I will send him unto you.*" "Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high." ‡ We wonder not at the effect of all this—"They worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and were continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God."

* Acts i. 10, 11.

† John xiv. 2, 3.

‡ John xvi. 7; Luke xxiv. 49.

CHAPTER V.

TIMES OF REFRESHING ON THE OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST.

WE now come to the contemplation of one of those "times of refreshing" vouchsafed to the Church, to which all that has been previously noticed was preparatory. The mission of the Baptist—the incarnation and personal ministry of the Redeemer—his death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven—the commission He gave to his Apostles to preach the Gospel to *the world*—his declaration that "all power in heaven and earth" was given unto Him—and his promise that He would be with them and their successors to the end of time,—were all designed for their encouragement, to assure them of their success in their great enterprise, and to prepare them for the great Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The great work to which the Saviour had called and consecrated them required all this. The Gospel is emphatically called "*the ministration of the Spirit.*"* It is spiritual in its character, agency, and results. There were impediments and

* 2 Cor. iii. 8.

obstacles opposed to its progress and establishment in the world which could only be overcome by such a Divine power. The universal ignorance and depravity of mankind, the prevalence and potency of false systems of religion, the carnal policy and might of States which opposed its progress—all needed, not only the power of the Redeemer to overrule all events for its ultimate triumphs, but the influence of the Spirit to dispose the hearts of men to receive it. This is equally true of individuals as of the great masses of society, to be permeated and sanctified by the Gospel, of every age and of every clime. “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.”*

The gift of the Holy Spirit was to be the *evidence* and *fruit* of the ascension and exaltation of the Redeemer in heaven. We read:—“The Holy Ghost was not yet given, *because* Jesus was not yet glorified.”† Therefore said He to his disciples, “I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will convince *the world* of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”‡ Ancient prophecy had no less clearly pointed to this connexion, like that of cause and effect, of the gift of the Spirit and the exaltation of the Redeemer—“Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men;

* Zech. iv. 6.

† John vii. 39.

‡ John xvi. 7, 8.

yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." * Hence we see the reason why the Saviour commanded his Apostles not to depart from Jerusalem, but to tarry there till they received this "power" from on high, "which," said He, "ye shall receive not many days hence."

With minds enlightened and elevated by the glories of the resurrection, by converse with their risen Lord, and by his ascension to heaven, we may well imagine with what joy and raised expectations the Apostles conversed together, and awaited the fulfilment of the Saviour's promise. After what had happened, could they doubt it? What would be that "*power*" they were to receive from on high?—what that fulness of truth to be communicated to them? How would they watch for and listen to every intimation of the coming event and glory! "The day of Pentecost is fully come," and the expectation has united them all in "one accord and in one place." This was a memorable day in the history of their nation, Church, and ritual. The Pentecostal festival was held fifty days after their Passover feast. The Passover festival commemorated deliverance from Egypt; Pentecost celebrated the giving of the Law by Moses, to them whom God had rescued from bondage, and taken into covenant with himself as his chosen people. All that these great events had prefigured was to be fulfilled. Christ, the true Passover, had been sacrificed on the cross, and in

* Ps. lxxviii. 18.

like manner, after a like interval of fifty days, was to be the promulgation of the new law of the Gospel. The giving of the Law inaugurated and established the Mosaic dispensation; the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost established the dispensation of the Gospel. In both cases all that preceded it was *preparatory*. The signs, miracles, and other acts which authenticated the commission of Moses, and those which bore witness to the greater Prophet, who arose "like unto him"—the blood of the Lamb, which saved the Israelites from the destroyer, as well as the sacrifice of Him who by his own blood saves us from destruction. There was another expressive ceremonial ordained in connexion with the festival of Pentecost. It was the time of the ingathering and presentation to God of the "*first-fruits of the harvest*."† Thus at the Christian Pentecost was to be gathered in the *first-fruits* of that great harvest of souls which should be the reward of the Redeemer's sufferings. The *place*, equally with the time, marks the wisdom of God in this great event. In *Jerusalem*, where the Saviour was rejected, had been most dishonoured, and been crucified, there his glory shall be manifested; there his character and claims shall be vindicated; there his glorious triumphs shall begin; there the first-fruits of the great harvest of redeemed souls shall be gathered into his Church. And this at a time when vast multitudes are gathered together, not only from all parts of Judea, but from

* Deut. xviii. 18.

† Lev. xxiii. 15—21.

other nations, most probably the greater from the general expectation of Messiah's appearance; thus provision is made, that the miracle of Pentecost might be authenticated, and more widely published abroad, and so the way be prepared for the spread of the Gospel among all nations. It is most probable that many who witnessed the miracle of Pentecost, had witnessed and taken part in the humiliation of the Saviour at the previous Passover. The demonstrations of Pentecost cleared up the mysteries of the Passover scenes, and will account for the convictions and results produced by the preaching of St. Peter on that occasion. Look at the miracle itself! This is best stated in the simple words of the sacred narrative:—"When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own

tongue, wherein we were born ? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judæa, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this ? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.”* The *signs* by which this miraculous descent of the Spirit upon the apostles and disciples were made known, are of expressive significancy : “ the sound of a mighty rushing wind filling the place where they were assembled,” and the appearance “ of cloven tongues, like as of fire, resting on the head of each of them.” These were unmistakable signs of the power and presence of Deity, and expressive emblems of the effects of the operations of the Holy Ghost. Thus, at the establishment of the dispensation of Moses and the giving of the law, God descended on Mount Sinai, in the presence of the people, in the midst of thunders and lightnings, and smoke and fire ; † so at the establishment of the Gospel dispensation, the descent of the Spirit is manifested by the like emblems of the Divine power and presence. Thus was fulfilled the prediction of the Baptist,—“ He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.” ‡

* Acts ii. 1—13.

† Exod. xix. 16—20.

‡ Matt. iii. 11.

How expressive are these emblems ! What can resist the power of the mighty rushing wind which raises the waves of the sea, uproots the trees of the wood, and casts down the obstacles which oppose its progress ! Thus the Gospel, accompanied by the power and demonstration of the Holy Spirit, would prove "mighty through God," in overcoming all the obstacles opposed to its progress and triumphs in the world. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth : so is every one that is born of the Spirit." * The other emblem of "cloven tongues, like as of fire," denoted the diversity of languages, which by the Holy Spirit they would be enabled to speak, and by which they would be fitted to preach the Gospel among all nations. The means of at once authenticating the reality of this miraculous communication of the Spirit investing them with "*power*" for their high office, were present and manifest to all. The multitudes gathered together at Jerusalem, from so many nations, and speaking such diverse languages, confirmed the truth of the miracle : they heard the Apostles declare the wonders of redemption, every one "in his own language ;" "every one in his own tongue, wherein they were born." The miracle was not in the *hearing*, but in the *speaking*. There could be no mistake or delusion here. Had the Apostles been learned men, and known to be so, it might have been

* John iii. 18.

said that they employed on this occasion languages which they had learned before; but they were known to be unlearned men; as "Galilæans," as speaking a language somewhat barbarous, the common language used in Judæa. The wonder and surprise, therefore, was to hear men so uncultivated and unlearned, all at once able to speak at least seven or eight languages, correctly and fluently. Though some mocked and endeavoured to resist the evidence of what was supernatural in this, multitudes felt and acknowledged this to be the work of God. Thus endowed from on high with the miraculous gift of tongues, the Apostles were qualified at once for their great work of preaching the Gospel among all nations. The curse of Babel in their case is annulled. This *power*, wherever they went, would be regarded by the heathen as one of the most striking evidences of the truth of the Gospel which they preached. The descent of the Spirit at Pentecost, at the time of the gathering together of some from so many different nations at Jerusalem, would prepare the way for the rapid spread of the Gospel. Those of different nations who thus witnessed the miracle of Pentecost, and who heard in their own tongues the Gospel from the lips of the Apostles, would on their return to their own countries carry with them the wondrous tidings of redemption, and thus the door would be opened, and the way be prepared, for the labours of the miraculously-endowed heralds of the Cross. These, many of them at least, we have reason

to believe, would be the first-fruits of that glorious harvest of souls to be gathered into the Church of Christ by his Apostles from the different nations and tribes here enumerated.

We should have a very inadequate idea of the true character and design of the miracle of Pentecost, and of its blessed and refreshing influence on the Church of Christ, if we closed our remarks here without considering it in its relation to the Saviour himself, and the future spread and triumphs of the Gospel in the world. What a convincing and assuring evidence was this descent of the Holy Ghost, to the Apostles and to others who witnessed it, of the truth of Christ's character and claims, and of his exaltation in heaven! He had assured his beloved disciples that his departure from them and ascension to heaven, would be signalized by the coming of "the Comforter"; that He would "send Him unto them;" that they should "receive the Holy Ghost." Now the promise is fulfilled; and in its fulfilment they have the best evidence that their Lord, whom they saw go up into heaven, is *there* exalted, and that he is unchanged in his regards to them. This is not less important to ourselves. No human eye could penetrate that cloud which veiled the ascending Saviour from the sight of his disciples. It needed some satisfactory evidence to assure those who believe in Him, that he was "received up into heaven, and exalted at the right hand of God." "Surely," as one observes, "it was fitting that some such peculiar evidence should

be furnished of a fact which no human witness could attest, but on which depends the certainty of our salvation. And if his exaltation was to be evinced and certified by the gift of the Holy Ghost, if this was the appointed and presignified proof of that glorious truth, then it is to be regarded as the fruit and token of the Redeemer's triumph, and as a pledge that every other blessing which He died to purchase has been won, and will be given to all who believe in his name." This was no less important viewed in connexion with the unbelieving Jews and the world at large. The descent of the Spirit, no less than his resurrection, was the Divine vindication of the Saviour's character, and claims, as the Son of God, the anointed Saviour.* Such was the argument of St. Peter in his address to the multitude on this occasion:—"This Jesus," whom ye have rejected and crucified, "hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. *Therefore* being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."† To this vindication of his character and claims, our Lord referred his Apostles when He thus addressed them:—"And when He, the Comforter, is come, he will convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of

* Rom. i. 4; 1 Tim. iii. 16.

† Acts ii. 32, 33.

this world is judged.”* The miraculous descent of the Spirit, affording as it did indubitable evidence of the exaltation of Christ in heaven, would convince these Jews of the sin of *unbelief*: they rejected Him as a “Deceiver;” but this was sufficient to convince them that He was, what He claimed to be, the anointed Saviour. It was no less the evidence and vindication of his personal “righteousness:” it declared Him to be a *righteous* person, whom they had condemned as a “*malefactor*.” His exaltation in heaven showed beyond all doubt his acceptance, and that He was “Jesus Christ the righteous.” How important and refreshing to the Church must have been this evidence of the truth of the character and claims of the Saviour; and how convincing it proved to the multitude we gather from the glorious results of the Pentecostal miracle.

The miracle of Pentecost is no less important viewed in connexion with the spread and triumphs of Christianity in all subsequent ages of the world. The Gospel which Christ commissioned the Apostles to preach “in all the world,” and for which they were thus qualified by the descent of the Holy Ghost upon them is, as before remarked, “*the ministration of the Spirit*.” This is the Divine agency by which its success was to be secured in all after ages. What evidence of the sufficiency of this mighty agency was exhibited on that day in the success which followed the preaching of St. Peter. Every revival of religion, in every age of the

* John xvi. 8—11.

Christian Church, must be ascribed to this. This is promised, and is to be expected and to be sought by the Church. May not the partial bestowment of the mighty influences of the Holy Spirit, and the partial spread and triumphs of the Gospel in the world, be traced to the want of faith and prayer in the Church for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit? Is there not too great reliance on human agency, to the overlooking and neglect of the agency of the Spirit of God, for success? It was when the disciples of Christ were "*all with one accord* in one place," the Spirit came down upon them. Had there been, instead of our present discords and divisions, more of Christian union in the Church, union of heart and of prayer, might we not hope for larger outpourings of the Holy Spirit, and a wider and more rapid spread of the Gospel? This is what is needed; this is what is promised in a more abundant measure in the latter days; this is what the Church should earnestly pray for and believingly expect, as necessary and efficient for the universal spread and triumphs of the Gospel in all the world. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord."

What a glorious "time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord," was this Pentecostal effusion of the Spirit to the Infant Church! Let us, for a moment, endeavour to place ourselves in the situation of the disciples. They had witnessed the glorious ascension of their Lord to heaven. He had left them with the

promise of the Holy Ghost, for which they were to wait at Jerusalem. When they heard the sound of "the mighty rushing wind," and saw "the cloven tongues, like as of fire," resting upon each other's head, and felt the delightful consciousness that they had each received a new "power" from on high, that they were "filled with the Holy Ghost," and began to speak in other tongues, "as the Spirit gave them utterance;"—Oh, who can tell the refreshment and the joy of that solemn hour to them! How precious to them the recollection of the Saviour's promise thus fulfilled to them! How convincing to their faith, how overflowing to them the joy, of such evidence that Christ was the anointed Saviour, "both Lord and Christ"! We mark the effects of this on the minds and character of the Apostles. This supernatural communication of "power" from on high has made them other men—"new creatures." They are no longer the retiring, doubting, and timid disciples of the Saviour; but, "strengthened with might" in their souls, they are full of faith, courage, and love; undaunted, persevering, and everywhere untiring and successful in preaching the Gospel. All their carnal notions of Messiah and his kingdom vanish before that fulness of truth concerning Christ and his kingdom which had been communicated to them by the illumination of the Spirit. How surprising and delightful to them must have been the opening of their commission to preach the Gospel on that day, when under the first sermon three thousand souls were

convinced of sin, converted to the faith, and gathered into the Church of Christ; among whom, doubtless, were many who had despised Him and had joined in the frantic cry, "Let him be crucified!" What a source of joy, of triumph, and refreshing to them, the marvellous success which immediately followed on their labours, when, as we read, "five thousand" believed; * and "the Word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." † What a refreshing assurance had they in all this of the promised presence of their exalted Lord with them: what a pledge of the success of all their future efforts in making known Christ and his salvation to the world! We marvel not, that we read,—
"They continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved." ‡

Thus, in the personal teaching, the death, resurrection, ascension, and exaltation in heaven of the Saviour, and the glorious outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, were broadly and firmly laid the *foundations* of the Redeemer's spiritual kingdom in the world. In the *facts* which have been already considered, and those about to be considered, were exhibited the glorious

* Acts. iv. 4. † Acts vi. 7. ‡ Acts ii. 46, 47.

characteristics of this kingdom, as a system of *truth*, of *grace*, of *power*, as *spiritual*, “the ministration of the Spirit,”—as *Catholic*, intended to embrace all nations, and to become universal. All the subsequent triumphs of the Gospel, to the end of the world, are so many *developments* of the nature, characteristics, and glories of this kingdom of Christ, which, thus viewed, is the great dowry of Divine love and mercy to the Church and the world, the blessings and treasures of which are being opened and communicated from age to age, and which are all sufficient to bless and save the world; and no other dispensation is required, or we think to be expected, to secure the accomplishment of the eternal purposes of God’s love, or of the Saviour’s mediation for the redemption of mankind.

CHAPTER VI.

TIMES OF REFRESHING AT THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL.

THE revival of religion and the persecution of its professors will generally be found to be contemporaneous. The history of the Church of Christ furnishes abundant evidence of this. True religion not only makes manifest what is evil, but is *antagonistic* to evil. Hence the dislike and opposition of the corrupt heart of man to it. "Every one," saith Christ, "that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd."* The infidel rejection of Christianity and the opposition offered to it is to be traced, not to the want of sufficient evidence of its divinity and truth, but to its holiness, and its aggressive character as condemnatory of human depravity. "The religion of Christ," it has been truly remarked, "is essentially an *aggressive* religion. It was proposed to the world, not as a speculative notion, or as a philosophical opinion, or as a theory which might be rejected at pleasure; but it was proposed, and urged, and insisted upon, as a religion of Divine origin, of undoubted truth, of exclusive

* John iii. 20.

demands upon the attention, of unsparing condemnation of all the popular idolatry, and every favourite vice which could please the corrupt heart and gratify the desire of the indulgence of every evil. For such a religion and for such teachers there could be no toleration." Paganism was tolerant of all systems of Paganism, because all were homogeneous in character and influence. The "gods many" were allowed to stand side by side in the Pantheon. But Christianity condemned every system of Polytheism, and called upon all, everywhere, to "turn from these vanities unto the living God;"*—and the result everywhere of the preaching of the Gospel was, that they who believed and embraced it "turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God."† Hence the Pagan persecutions with which Christianity and Christians were everywhere assailed in Pagan nations.

There was, however, a special reason for the hatred and persecution of Christianity and its professors by the *Jews*. The *catholicity* of the religion of Christ, as opposed to the limitations and exclusiveness of Judaism, though offensive to the national prejudices of the Jews, though one ground of opposition, was not the only or principal motive for their hostility to the Gospel. They looked upon it as subversive of a religion of Divine origin, and of venerable institutions of Divine appointment—as equally opposed to the privileges and impressive grandeur of the old Law, which gave them pre-

* Acts xiv. 15.

† 1 Thess. i. 9.

eminence over all other people on earth. Christianity was regarded by the Jews and their rulers, not only in the light of apostasy from, but as treason and rebellion against Judaism—as breaking down the fence and uprooting the hedge which separated the heritage of the Lord from the rest of the world. It is not, therefore, surprising, that as the religion of Christ began to prevail and to make converts among them, Jewish hatred and persecution were manifested against it. This our Lord, in repeated and clear sayings, had led his followers to expect. How soon had they proof and experience of this in the persecution and violent death of the first Christian martyr, *St. Stephen*! It is easy to imagine the effect of this on the minds of the primitive believers in the infant Church. Here they saw the truth of what our Lord had foretold of the treatment they had to expect from an unbelieving world. “They were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the Apostles.”* The affrighted and scattered disciples of the Saviour needed special comfort from above to raise their sinking spirits, and to nerve them to courage and fidelity in the profession of the Gospel. Soon this was provided for them in the miraculous conversion of one who had shared in the guilt of the martyrdom of Stephen, and had proved himself a relentless persecutor of all who called on the name of Christ. What a proof would this be to them of the *power* of the Gospel, and of the presence of the

* Acts viii. 1.

Saviour with them, when they could point to Saul of Tarsus, and say, "He which persecuted us in time past, now preaches the faith which he once destroyed." Well might they take courage, and "glorify God in him." *

The conversion of the Apostle St. Paul is one of the great facts of Christianity, demonstrative of its truth, and developing its character and results. To this great event we now direct our attention: properly to estimate its importance, a brief glance at the history of this remarkable man, before and after his conversion, is necessary. Saul of Tarsus is first introduced to notice in the sacred narrative as "a young man who kept the clothes of them who stoned Stephen."† From the particulars he gives us of his own history, we learn that he was of Jewish parentage,—“circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews.”‡ He was born at Tarsus, in Cilicia; his father enjoyed the rights of a Roman citizen, but in what way he acquired that privilege we know not: Saul was in consequence a “free-born” citizen of Rome. How important this right to the privileges of a Roman citizen was to him in after years we have frequent occasion to remark in the progress of his history. To this he owed the preservation of his life, and his visit, on his being taken, to Rome, and his preaching the Gospel there. How much often depends

* Gal. i. 23, 24.

† Acts vii. 58.

‡ Phil. iii. 5.

on the circumstances in which a child is born ! Though overlooked at the time and undervalued, the importance of this is often developed at a future time. At Tarsus, his native city, the capital of Cilicia, was a noted university, in which he was probably trained in all the learning of the day. His references to, and quotations from, the writings of heathen antiquity which occur in his discourses, and especially at Athens, where he disputed with the philosophers and stoics of Greece, supply proof of this. At an early age he left Tarsus for Jerusalem, where, as he tells us, "he was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel," a Jewish doctor of the highest repute. In reference to this period, he says, "I profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals." Thus he enjoyed the best opportunities which the times afforded of becoming acquainted both with Pagan and Jewish literature. He was of an ardent religious temperament of mind—a proud, bigoted, persecuting Jewish *Pharisee*, "being exceedingly zealous of the traditions of his fathers."* The language in which he speaks of himself, in terms of humiliation, as "the chief of sinners," as "least of all saints," do not justify the meaning which some give to them, as if he had lived before his conversion an immoral life, in open and allowed transgression of the law of God, of which indeed we have no evidence; but are rather to be considered as indicating the deep feeling he had of his unworthiness and guilt as a persecutor of Christ and

* Gal. i. 14.

his followers. Before his conversion he lived a strictly moral and religious life, according to the notions of such a life which obtained among the Jews: "after the straitest sect of the Jews, he lived a Pharisee." It is easy to apprehend how compatible such views and such a life were with the prejudice and hostility he manifested against Christ and the Gospel. He looked upon Judaism as the religion revealed and established by God—at its rites as of Divine institution. He regarded Christ as the subverter of it—the Gospel as shaking men's reverence for it, and as alienating them from it. As a Jewish zealot, from a misguided and perverted conscience, he became a persecutor. "I verily thought," he says, "that I *ought* to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus, which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities." * And all this while, he tells us, "I thought I did God service!" The case of the Apostle shows that the plea of sincerity and conscience affords no palliation, much less any justification, of persecution. It seems strange that a mind so inquisitive and so enlightened by science could resist the evidence of those miraculous facts which at the time had occurred at Jerusalem, by which the

* Acts xxvi. 9—11.

truth of the Gospel had been attested, which had awakened such a spirit of inquiry, and induced so many to embrace the Gospel and profess faith in Christ. He could not be ignorant of the miracles which signalized the death of Christ—of the reports and evidence of his resurrection—or of the surprising wonders of the day of Pentecost. His strong Jewish prejudices, his hostility to Christ, the enmity of his carnal mind, resisted all this evidence of the truth, and he continued a persecutor of Christ and his followers. His one desire and object was the annihilation of Christianity.

How unlikely did it appear that Saul of Tarsus would become the disciple of Christ—that the persecutor of the Gospel would become the most zealous and most successful preacher of it—that his best energies and years would be employed in preaching and spreading abroad the faith he once sought to destroy! We now approach the consideration of this marvellous and happy change. The time when it took place appeared of all other the most unlikely, as the means by which it was effected are altogether miraculous. The sacred historian informs us that the last persecuting efforts of Saul of Tarsus were directed against the Christians at Damascus. “And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the High Priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were

men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem." * It appears probable from this, that the great Sanhedrim claimed the same authority in religious matters over the Jews in foreign countries as they exercised over them in Jerusalem. "No journey," observes one, "was ever taken in which so much interest is concentrated as this of St. Paul from Jerusalem to Damascus. It is so critical a passage in the history of God's dealings with man, and we feel it to be so closely bound up with all our best knowledge and best happiness in this life, and with all our hopes for the world to come, that the mind is delighted to dwell upon it, and we are eager to learn or imagine its details. The conversion of Saul was like the call of a second Abraham." At length the persecutor comes within sight of Damascus! The disciples of Christ had heard of his persecuting mission, and were full of alarm. He who watched over his infant Church, which He had "purchased with his own blood," now miraculously interposes for its preservation, by converting the persecutor into a friend. "At midday," "suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven; and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *Me*? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, *I am Jesus whom thou persecutest!*" It is clear, from the narrative and from the frequent references and allusions to this by the Apostle afterwards, that this manifestation

* Acts ix.

of the Saviour to him was not a mere impression made on his mind during a trance or ecstasy, but a *real, direct, and glorious revelation of Christ himself to the Apostle*. Thus, when he vindicated to the Church at Corinth his claims to the apostolic office and authority, he says, "Am I not an Apostle? *Have I not seen Christ the Lord?*"* And thus again, when adducing the evidences of the Saviour's resurrection, he says, "He was seen of Cephas . . . last of all, *He was seen by me*, as one born out of due time."† Thus it was considered by the rest of the apostles. "And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he essayed to join himself to the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them *how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that He had spoken to him*, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Christ. And he was with them, coming in and going out at Jerusalem."‡ It will be seen at once how adapted and how powerful this glorious vision of Christ was to produce conviction of the truth of the Saviour's character and claims, and of the Gospel to which Saul the persecutor was so violently opposed. In common with the rest of the Jews, he regarded Jesus as a deceiver. He could not believe that one who had appeared among them in such circumstances of humiliation could be what He claimed

* 1 Cor. ix. 1.

† 1 Cor. xv. 8.

‡ Acts ix. 26—28.

to be, the Messiah expected by the nation. This appearance of the Saviour to him in his glory demonstrated alike the truth of his character and of his claims. It furnished evidence, which could not be resisted, that He whom his countrymen rejected and crucified had, as his followers boldly declared, risen from the dead and ascended to glory; that He was indeed the Son of God—the promised Messiah. Now, in the immediate, awful presence of that risen and glorified Saviour, and hearing his voice, how overpowering must have been the conviction of his guilt in persecuting Him and his followers! What terror and alarm must the question have carried to his heart, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *me*?” And how must this alarm and terror have been deepened, when, in answer to his question, “Who art thou, Lord?” He replied, “*I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest!*” We wonder not that “he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” His heart is changed; he is at once convinced of his sin and danger, and of the truth and glory of Christ, and made willing to submit to his will. “And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. And Saul rose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man; but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor

drink." * What Saul felt and experienced, or what further revelations were made to him during these three days of blindness and solitude, it is impossible for us to say. It was a time in which he gained the knowledge of his guilt and danger as a sinner, and of the grace and love of Christ as a Saviour. It is intimated, in several allusions made to it at this time, that Christ made known to him the design of his marvellous conversion—that he was to be the messenger of his Gospel to the Gentiles, and what great things he should suffer for his name's sake.

In the city of Damascus, coincident with all this, other events occurred of an interesting character:—"There was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, and hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: for

* Acts ix. 3—9.

I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house ; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales : and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. But all that heard him were amazed, and said, Is not this he which destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests ? But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ." *

As the conversion of St. Paul was altogether miraculous, so, in its design and object, it was special in its character. It was the evidence to himself and others of his apostolic character and authority: "Am I not an apostle? *Have I not seen the Lord?*" He received his commission, without the intervention of any human agency, *immediately* from the Lord himself. Again and again he appeals to this as an important fact, when it was necessary for him to vindicate his apostolic au-

* Acts ix. 10—22.

thority against those who questioned and impugned it. He speaks of himself as “a called apostle,” “an apostle by the will of God,” “an apostle sent not from men, or by men, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father who raised Him from the dead.” With regard to the Gospel which he preached, he says:—“It is not after man; for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.” He was not trained in the school of the apostles; for he tells us, “Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.” It appears that his first visit to the apostles was not till three years after his conversion.* His call and his work were special, and clearly indicated to him by Christ himself at the time of his conversion:—“Arise, and stand upon thy feet; for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of those things which thou hast seen, and of those things in which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles unto whom I now send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.”† This special call of the apostle was—and it was his glory—that he should be the apostle to *the Gentiles*: “Unto me, who am less than the least

* Gal. i. 17, 18.

† Acts xxvi. 16—18.

of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach the unsearchable riches of Christ *among the Gentiles*.” * Such a special call was required to “open the door of faith unto the Gentiles,” and to overcome those Jewish prejudices which so long rested on the minds of the rest of the apostles, and made them hesitate as to the lawfulness of preaching the Gospel to any but Jews. Thus an agency was specially raised up and divinely prepared to carry the Gospel to the Gentiles.

How wonderful and glorious is the event we have been contemplating, and how much is there in it to instruct and awaken Christian gratitude! What evidence have we in the conversion of St. Paul, and in his subsequent life, of the truth of Christianity! What short of the fullest conviction of this could have produced that sudden and marvellous change in the views and feelings of such a man, and led him to renounce wealth and honour for a life of self-denying labour and persecution, and at last to submit to a martyr's death for Christ! What proof have we here of the glory of a crucified and risen Saviour—of his omniscience, as intimately cognisant of the persecutions and afflictions of his people—of his oneness with them—of his sympathy and love in regarding all the injuries done to them as done unto himself—and of his readiness and ability to succour and deliver them! What a manifestation have we in this instance of the power of his grace to subdue the hardest heart—to convert the per-

• Eph. iii. 8.

secutor into a friend; of the riches of his mercy to pardon the "chief" of sinners; and of his ability to raise up and qualify instruments for special service and usefulness in his Church! How lovely the exhibition in this case of the blessed effects of real religion, leading those who are partakers of the grace of God to rejoice in the conversion, and to receive into "the communion of saints," and to recognise as beloved brethren, those who were once opposed to them, and whom they feared and shunned as enemies of the Gospel of Christ! Regarding St. Paul as a converted *Jew*, what a pledge and type have we in his conversion of the future conversion of his countrymen, the Jews! It is interesting to remark how often and pointedly the Apostle adverts to his own conversion as confirmatory of this view:—"Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin."* "Howbeit, for this cause, I obtained mercy: that in me, *first*, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering *for a pattern* (*ὑποστυπωσιν*) to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting."† What St. Paul was *before* conversion, that the Jews now are,—unbelievers in Christ,—the rejectors and enemies of Christ, and the despisers and persecutors of those, especially of their own nation, who believe in Christ. As they resemble him in their unbelief, so is there reason to believe they will resemble

* Rom. xi. 1.

† 1 Tim. i. 16.

him in their conversion, and in the means by which it will be effected. The language of prophecy renders it probable that, as in the case of St. Paul, the conversion of the Jews, as a people, will be the effect of a miraculous and personal manifestation of the Saviour to them :—" I will pour upon the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplications : *and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced*, and they shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for his only son ; and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born."* " Ye shall not see me," said Christ to the Jews, " until the time come, when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."† As they resemble the Apostle in these respects, so will the Jews, when converted, resemble him in the blessed fruits of his conversion. Like him, there is reason to believe they will be full of love and zeal to spread the Gospel, and become the most active and zealous missionaries to proclaim to the nations " the unsearchable riches of Christ." " If the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, *how much more their fulness ?*" ‡

What " times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord" must have followed on the conversion of St. Paul to the infant Church at Damascus, and to the

* Zech. xii. 10.

† Mark xiii. 35.

‡ Rom. xi. 12.

Church of Christ generally ! “ *Then* had the Churches rest throughout all Judæa, and Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified ; and, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.”* We may well imagine this as the effect of his conversion at Damascus. What a joy and refreshment to the disciples of Christ in that city, who feared his coming among them as a persecutor, to recognise him as a Christian brother, and to listen to him boldly preaching that Gospel he had before sought to destroy, and to witness his zeal in winning many souls to Christ ! We mark the same effects of his conversion in the Church at Jerusalem : “ They glorified God in him.”† Wherever the Apostle went, in his extensive travels and labours, preaching the Gospel, there “ times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord ” were experienced. Christian Churches were established, the heathen were “ turned from idols to serve the true God,”—and believers in Christ were multiplied. He could say, “ Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.”‡ How has the Church in all subsequent ages been refreshed and revived by the epistolary writings of this blessed Apostle ! From these living fountains what millions have drunk the refreshing waters of

* Acts ix. 31.

† Gal. i. 24.

‡ 2 Cor. ii. 14.

life! The history of the Church, in all ages, abundantly shows that in the degree in which the doctrines of grace, so fully and clearly set forth in the ministry and writings of St. Paul, have been maintained and held forth by the Church, there have been "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord."

CHAPTER VII.

TIMES OF REFRESHING IN THE CALLING OF THE GENTILES.

THE *catholicity* of the Gospel distinguishes it from the former dispensation of the law. Judaism, for special reasons, was national, local, and exclusive, as regarded other nations; unsocial in character and aspect. The reasons of this peculiarity will be found in the depravity of mankind; in their early and wide-spread apostasy from the knowledge and worship of the true God. Judaism was designed for the preservation of the knowledge and worship of the true God, till "the fulness of the time" should come, and Messiah should appear, "in whom," it was promised, "all nations of the earth should be blessed," who should be "the light to enlighten the Gentiles and the glory of his people Israel."* For these important ends it pleased God, in mercy, early to separate one family—the family of Abraham;—one nation, of which Abraham was the father and head, from all others, to be the depositaries of his truth, among whom he would preserve the knowledge and worship of Himself; from whom the promised Messiah should arise, and through whom

* Luke ii. 32.

this saving knowledge should be communicated to the rest of the world. Having thus chosen and separated the Jews from all other nations to be unto Him "a peculiar people,"—"at sundry times and in divers manners," God imparted to them special revelations of his truth,—established his temple and worship in the midst of them,—and enjoined and secured their separation from every other people by special laws and peculiar rites, the badges to them of this peculiarity, and the pledges and emblems to them of a better dispensation, of "good things to come" in the days of the Messiah. The government of the nation was a *Theocracy*, and continued such till they sinfully desired, in imitation of other nations, to have a king set over them. God, in anger, gave them a king; but still vindicated his supremacy over them by special interpositions on their behalf while they remained faithful; or by special and immediate judgments when they became disobedient to his laws. The inspired Apostle gives, in few words, this glorious summary of Jewish privileges: "To them pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises,—and of them, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever."* What marvel then that the Jews blended with feelings of nationality and patriotism, and the prejudice with which they regarded every other people, the idea that they were *exclusively* the

* Rom. ix. 4, 5.

favourites of God, and the sole recipients of his blessing. The language of prophecy,—the very locality of prophetic imagery,—the special and miraculous preservation of their nation amidst the uprooting and overthrow of other mighty kingdoms,—all seemed to sanction their idea of exclusive privileges. The wide and marked difference between them and all other nations favoured this fond presumption. While over all other people was spread the darkness of idolatry and superstition, the inhabitants of Palestine possessed “the lively oracles of God,” and the means of obtaining more sublime ideas of the nature, perfections, and government of Jehovah than the most renowned sages of the heathen world ever imagined and taught. To them the God of all the earth sustained a peculiar and local relation as the “God of Israel,”—their religion was Divine, their history was a history of miracles.

It is true that from the beginning, even in the covenant God made with Abraham, there was given a clear and distinct intimation of God’s purpose of mercy to the Gentiles, which was often repeated by equally distinct utterances of their prophets; yet the Jews tenaciously clung to the idea that they were exclusively the people of God. The Gentiles, in their view, if in any degree objects of the Divine mercy, were left to the *uncovenanted* mercy of God. Even those Gentiles who renounced idolatry and embraced the worship of the true God were only partially admitted to the privileges of their temple worship;—“a middle wall of

partition" separated the court of the Gentiles from those more sacred parts of the temple in which Israelites alone were thought worthy to appear before God. They overlooked the fact, that, as one observes, "they were not intended to *engross* the Divine favour, but to be the mediums and diffusers of it. They were not only to be blessed, but to be blessings. Hence their being placed in the midst of the earth, that from them knowledge might be derived, and proselytes to revealed religion might be made; and that in the fulness of time 'out of Zion might go forth the Law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem;' and that the Great Supper, as our Lord calls it, and which was designed for the whole family of Adam, might be spread in the midst of the earth and be accessible to all."

The admission of the Gentiles, equally with the Jews, to the blessings and privileges of the Gospel is spoken of in the New Testament as a "*mystery*." The term so applied is not to be considered as denoting what is *inexplicable* or *unintelligible*, but as expressing what *had not before been fully and clearly revealed*. Thus St. Paul explains it when dwelling on this subject to the Ephesians:—"If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation He made known unto me *the mystery*; . . . which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, *as it is now revealed* unto the holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body,

and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel.” *

It may appear strange to us, that, after the many clear intimations given in the prophets, and especially after the express commission given by the risen Saviour to his apostles, to “go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature,” that any doubt should exist in the minds of the apostles as to the lawfulness of preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles. It needed, however, a special revelation, a special intervention of God, to overcome those strong Jewish prejudices already noticed, and to enlighten and elevate the minds even of apostles to the catholicity and philanthropy of that Gospel of the grace of God, of which they were the appointed messengers to all nations. There was a twofold and unmistakable special intervention of God for this object: the miraculous conversion of St. Paul as “the apostle to the Gentiles” prepared an agency for its accomplishment; and the conversion of the Gentile centurion, Cornelius, proclaimed “the *opening* of the door” of faith to the Gentiles.

Hitherto the ministry of the apostles had been confined to the Jews, and none had been admitted into the Christian Church by baptism, but Jews or proselytes to Judaism. The time was now come in which God would show that, under the Gospel, no difference was to be made between Jew and Gentile; in which the catholicity of the Gospel and of the Christian Church

* Eph. iii. 2—6.

was to be made manifest. This was the important end to be accomplished, and the great truth to be taught by the conversion of Cornelius and his household. Cornelius was by birth a Gentile; in all probability a native of Italy, a Roman, and by profession a soldier. As the commander of a Roman band of soldiers he was stationed at Cesaræa. It appears that he had become a proselyte to Judaism. He was "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house; gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always." * "He saw in a vision, evidently about the ninth hour," the hour of offering the evening sacrifice among the Jews,—"an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius! and when he looked upon him he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And He said unto him, Thy prayers and thy alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter; he lodgeth with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea-side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do. And when the angel, which spake unto Cornelius, was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually: and when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa." † Simultaneously with this vision of the angel to this Gentile centurion, to prepare him for the reception of the Gospel, was the vision to Peter to prepare him to preach the Gospel to Cornelius

* Acts x. 1, 2.

† Acts. x. 3—8.

and his house. "On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: and he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, and saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." To render all this more certain and significative, this vision was thrice repeated; "and the vessel was received up again into heaven." * This vision to Peter was full of meaning. His prejudices were so strong against uncircumcised persons, that but for this vision, even the report of the vision of Cornelius had probably failed to satisfy his mind as to the propriety or lawfulness of going to a Gentile family. The distinction between meats, clean and unclean, established by the Jewish law, here adverted to, had also marked the distinction and separation between the Jews and the Gentiles. "To inform a Jew that God had cleansed those animals which before had been declared unclean, and that they were no longer to be

* Acts x. 9—16.

deemed common, or rejected as such, was, in fact, to announce the abrogation of the Mosaic law, and the introduction of another and more enlarged dispensation ; and it plainly intimated that uncircumcised Gentiles, whom God cleansed by faith and grace, were to be received into the Church, without regard to the ceremonial law, or to their uncleanness according to it." By this vision, afterwards explained by circumstances, God supernaturally intimated to Peter that He was no respecter of persons, but that "in every nation He accepts him that feareth Him and worketh righteousness ;" that all such distinctions as depend on "meats and drinks," and other observances which rested on the Jewish law, were about to pass away,—that such things were but temporary ; that in their design they were but "the shadow of good things to come ;" that "the body is of Christ ;" that under the new dispensation of the Gospel, all believers are "complete in Christ,—circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands ;" that in Christ, and under the Gospel, "neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."* How it pleased God to produce the conviction of all this on the mind of the Apostle is beautifully set forth in the narrative :—"Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold the men which were sent' from Cornelius," were standing at the gate and inquiring for him. "While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit

* Gal. vi. 15.

said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. Arise, therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing, for I have sent them." Thus convinced that his call to this mission was of God, and thus instructed, on the morrow Peter set out for Cesaræa with the men, taking with him certain Christians of the circumcision; and, entering into the house where Cornelius and his friends awaited his arrival, he preached Christ unto them! He proclaimed the mission of the Saviour, the great object of his mission, his sufferings, his resurrection, his commission to the apostles to preach the Gospel, and closes with the full statement of the freeness and fulness of the grace of the Gospel,—“to Him give all the prophets witness, through his name, *whosoever believeth in Him*, shall receive remission of sins.”* “While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the Word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God.”† This special intervention of God for the calling of the Gentiles and their admission, as in the case before us, by baptism into the Christian Church, was attested by signs and wonders which could not be mistaken. It appears that the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Cornelius and all who heard the Word, was shown by a visible and

* Acts x. 34—43.

† Acts x. 44—46.

unmistakable sign, like that which attested the descent of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and was attended with similar effects, as the gift of tongues. To the rest of the apostles, whom tidings of all this had reached at Jerusalem, and who, under the influence of their Jewish prejudices, murmured at it, Peter subsequently related the particulars of this wonderful manifestation of God's mercy to the Gentiles; their minds were elevated above, and freed from their former prejudices. What had occurred convinced them that God was no respecter of persons, that the Gospel was the ministration of the Spirit to all people, that Jewish exclusiveness was at an end: "When they heard these things," as Peter related the facts in order, "they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, *Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life!*"* Thus was "the door of faith opened to the Gentiles." Thus the "mystery" which had been "hidden for ages, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel," was revealed to the Church and to the world.

How marvellous must have been the effect of all this on the minds of the apostles and primitive believers! What a mighty change did it make in all their views and feelings! What a "time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord," was thus ushered into the Gentile world! From the times of this manifestation of

* Acts xi. 18.

the Divine purpose of mercy to the Gentiles at Cesaræa, we remark in the apostles a wonderful enlargement of mind and heart. Their views and feelings were no longer limited by Jewish prejudices; but their zeal and benevolence were extended to all mankind. In what a new and different light would they look upon the world at large! They would no longer look upon their own nation as exclusively the object of Divine favour; but regard the Saviour, whom they loved and preached as sent of God, "to be *the Saviour of the world*:"* they would look upon the Gospel as a scheme and provision of love and mercy needed, designed, and sufficient for the moral necessities of the world at large. They would now better understand and be prepared to carry into effect the benevolent commission they had received from their exalted Lord to "go into *all the world* and preach the Gospel to *every creature*." This event broke down all their long cherished prejudices and showed them that the path to eternal life was opened to all the world by Him who had proclaimed himself "the way, the truth, and the life." What enlargement and elevation would thus be given to their views of the love of the Saviour and of the efficacy and results of his redeeming merits! They would thus be taught, that He died not for their nation *alone*, but for the *world*: that his death was "a propitiation for their sins, and not for theirs only, but also for the sins of the *whole world*:"† that his "unsearchable riches" of mercy and grace were not

* 1 John iv. 14.

† 1 John ii. 2.

to be restricted to themselves, but were sufficient and designed to bless all mankind. And would not this memorable event at Cesaræa open to them a glorious vista of the future,—giving them the assurance and the brightening hopes of the coming triumphs of the Gospel of Christ among all nations. Would they not joyfully anticipate the time when by the preaching of the Gospel there would be gathered “from all nations, and kindreds, and people and tongues, a great multitude which no man can number,” to join in the song of praise,—“Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb!”* This was truly and emphatically the ushering in of “times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord,”—not only to the Church at Jerusalem, but to the Gentile world. From this important event, the labours of the apostles took a new direction. Up to this time they preached the Gospel to *Jews only*, but from henceforth they “turned unto the Gentiles.” From this time the Gospel commenced its career of triumph, and its heralds of mercy went beyond the narrow boundaries of Judæa into “all nations,” preaching salvation to “every creature.” Everywhere their labours were crowned with success; the powers of paganism fell before them; the temples of idols were forsaken; lying oracles were silenced; the people “turned from dumb idols to serve the living and the true God.” Opposition, everywhere experienced, only tended “to the furtherance of the

* Rev. vii. 9, 10.

Gospel." At Corinth, at Ephesus, at Colosse, and at Rome, Christian Churches were established, and believers in Christ were multiplied. So rapid and so irresistible was the spread of the Gospel, that one, speaking in the name of the rest of the apostles, could say, "Now, thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us, in every place."* At length Christianity, after having passed through the fiery ordeal of successive persecutions, sat down in triumph on the throne of the Cæsars, and became the recognised religion of the far spreading and mighty Roman Empire.

Nations, the learned and the rude,
Were by these heavenly arms subdued ;
While Satan rages at his loss,
And hates the doctrines of the Cross.

NOTE.

THE JEWISH QUESTION.

Having considered the remarkable fact of the conversion of Cornelius and his household as a special intervention of God for the "opening of the door of faith unto the Gentiles," this is the proper place for some remarks on what may be called the *Jewish Question*, the agitation of which occasioned so much trouble and division in the Apostolic Church, and to which

* 2 Cor. ii. 14.

there is such frequent reference in the Apostolic Epistles. This is necessary to the right understanding of many facts and arguments in the apostolic writings. Though the apostles at Jerusalem, as already noticed, were convinced by the statement of St. Peter, and of those who accompanied him to Cesaræa, that God had "granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life," subsequent events show that their conviction was not complete, that their Jewish prejudices were but partially removed. On this subject we will avail ourselves of the statements of a writer who has ably treated this question:—

"Hesitation and perplexity began to arise in the minds of Jewish Christians with scrupulous misgivings concerning the rectitude of Peter's conduct, and an uncomfortable jealousy of the new converts. And nothing could be more natural than all this jealousy and perplexity. To us, with our present knowledge, it would seem reasonable that the slightest relaxation of ceremonial law, should have been willingly and eagerly welcomed. But the view of the Jewish standing point was very different. The religious difficulty in the mind of a Jew was greater than we can easily imagine. We may believe that the minds of many may have been perplexed by the words and conduct of our Lord himself; for He had not been sent 'save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel'; and He had said it was 'not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs.'* Until St. Paul appeared before the Church in his true character as the Apostle of the Uncircumcision, few understood that 'the law of commandments contained in ordinances,' had been abolished by the Cross of Christ;† and that the 'other sheep,' not of the Jewish fold, should be freely admitted into the 'one fold' by the 'one Shepherd.'‡ The smouldering feeling of discontent increased, and became more evident as new Gentile converts were admitted into the Church. To pass over all the other events of the interval which had elapsed since the baptism of Cornelius, the

* Matt. xv. 24—26.

† Eph. ii. 15.

‡ John x. 16.

results of the recent journey of Paul and Barnabas through the cities of Asia Minor, must have excited a great commotion among the Jewish Christians. 'A door of faith had been opened unto the Gentiles.' 'He that wrought effectually in Peter to the Apostleship of the Circumcision, the same had been mighty in Paul towards the Gentiles.'* And we cannot well doubt that both he and Barnabas had freely joined in social intercourse with the Gentile Christians at Antioch in Pisidia, at Iconium, Lystra and Derbe, as Peter 'at the first,' 'a good while ago,' had eaten with Cornelius at Cæsarea. At Antioch in Syria, it seems evident that both parties lived together in amicable intercourse and in much freedom. Nor, indeed, is this the city where we should have expected the Jewish controversy to have come to a crisis; for it was from Antioch that Paul and Barnabas had first been sent as missionaries to the heathen; and it was at Antioch that Greek proselytes had first accepted the truth, and that the united body of believers had just been called '*Christians*.'

"Jerusalem was the metropolis of the Jewish world. The exclusive feelings which the Jews carried with them wherever they were diffused, were concentrated in Jerusalem in their most intense degree. It was there, in the sight of the Temple, and with all the recollections of their ancestors surrounding their daily life, that the impatience of the Jewish Christians kindled into burning indignation. They saw that Christianity, instead of being the holiest and the purest form of Judaism, was rapidly becoming a universal and indiscriminating religion, in which the Jewish element would be absorbed and lost. This revolution could not appear to them in any other light than as rebellion against all that they had been taught to hold inviolably sacred. And since there was no doubt that the great instigator of this change of opinion was the Saul of Tarsus, whom they had once known as a young Pharisee at the feet of Gamaliel,

* Acts xiv. 27; Gal. ii. 8.

the contest took the form of an attack made by 'a certain sect of the Pharisees' upon St. Paul. The battle which had been fought and lost in the Cilician Synagogue was now to be renewed with the Church itself.

"The earliest divisions in the Church of Christ into opposing parties was caused by Judaizing teachers. Their great object was to turn the newly-converted Christians into Jewish proselytes, who should differ from other Jews only in the recognition of Jesus as the Messiah. In their view the natural posterity of Abraham were still as much as ever the Theocratic nation entitled to God's exclusive favour, to which the rest of mankind could only be admitted by becoming Jews. Those members of the party who were really sincere believers in Christianity probably expected that the majority of their countrymen, finding their own national privileges thus acknowledged and maintained by the Christians, would on their part more willingly acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah; and thus they fancied that the Christian Church would gain a larger accession of members than could ever accrue to it from isolated Gentile converts; so that they probably justified their opposition to St. Paul, on grounds not only of Jewish but of Christian policy; for they imagined by his admission of uncircumcised Gentiles into the full membership of the Church, he was repelling far more numerous converts of Israelitish birth, who would otherwise have accepted the doctrine of Jesus. This belief (which in itself, and seen from this point of view, in that age, was not unreasonable) might have enabled them to excuse their consciences as Christians, the bitterness of their opposition to the great Christian Apostle. But in considering them as a party, we must bear in mind that they were more Jews than Christians. They acknowledged Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Messiah, and so far they were distinguished from the rest of their countrymen; but the Messiah himself, they thought, was only "a Saviour of his people Israel," and they

ignored that true meaning of the ancient prophecies, which St. Paul was inspired to reveal to the universal Church, teaching us that 'the excellent things' which are spoken of the people of God and the city of God in the Old Testament, are to be interpreted of 'the household of faith,' and of the 'heavenly Jerusalem.'

"The Judaizers at first insisted upon the observance of the Law of Moses, and especially of circumcision, as an absolute requisite for admission into the Church, saying, 'Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, *ye cannot be saved.*' But after the decision of the council of Jerusalem, it was impossible for them to require this condition; they therefore altered their tactics, and as the decrees of the council seemed to assume that Jewish Christians would continue to observe the Mosaic law, the Judaizers took advantage of this to insist on the necessity of separation between those who kept the whole law and all others. They taught that the uncircumcised were in a lower condition, as to spiritual privileges, and at a greater distance from God, and only the circumcised converts were in a state of full acceptance with Him; in short, they kept the Gentile converts who would not submit to circumcision on the same footing as *proselytes of the gate*, and treated the circumcised alone as *proselytes of righteousness*. When we comprehend all that was involved in this, we can easily understand the energetic opposition with which their teaching was met by St. Paul. It was no mere question of outward observance—no matter of indifference (as it might at first sight appear), whether the Gentile converts were circumcised or not; on the contrary, the question at stake was nothing less than this, whether Christians should be merely a Jewish sect, under the bondage of a ceremonial law, and only distinguished from other Jews by believing that Jesus was the Messiah; or whether they should be the *catholic* Church of Christ, owning no other allegiance but to Him, freed from the bondage of the letter, and bearing the seal

of their inheritance no longer in their bodies, but in their hearts. We can understand now the full truth of his indignant remonstrance: 'If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.'—And we can understand, also, the exasperation which his teaching must have produced in those who held the very antithesis of this, namely, that Christianity without circumcision was utterly worthless. Hence their long and desperate struggle to destroy the influence of St. Paul in every Church which he founded or visited; in Antioch, in Galatia, in Corinth, in Jerusalem, in Rome. For as he was in truth the great prophet divinely commissioned to reveal the catholicity of the Christian Church, so he appeared to them the great apostate, urged by the worst motives, to break down the fence and root up the hedge, which separated the heritage of the Lord from a godless world." *

Looked at in this light, this attempt to Judaize and corrupt Christianity assumes a degree of importance; it went to nullify the commission and authority of St. Paul,—to pervert the Gospel of Christ, and was intended to turn away the Christian converts from "the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free," and bring them under the "bondage" of Jewish rites and ceremonies. A reference to a few passages in the apostolic epistles will show how the apostle met and refuted this dangerous error. Did the Judaizing teachers, to shake the confidence of his converts in the truth of the doctrines he taught, call in question his authority as a divinely commissioned *apostle*? To meet this, he is led so explicitly to the vindication of his apostolic commission and authority as derived immediately from God. To the Church at Corinth, he says, "Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are not ye my work in the Lord? If I be not an apostle unto others, yet, doubtless, I am to you:

* Howson's and Conybeare's "Life of St. Paul." Vol. I., pp. 221—224, and 474—476.

for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord." * To the Church of Galatia he writes : " I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not *after man*. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the *revelation* of Jesus Christ." † To the Church at Ephesus he writes : " If ye have heard of the dispensation of *the grace of Christ given me to you-ward*, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is *now* revealed unto the holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit ; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel : whereof I was made a minister according to the gift of the grace of God, *given unto me by the effectual working of his power*. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, *is this grace given*, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." ‡ Did the Judaizing teachers insist that without circumcision and the keeping of the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic law they could not be justified and saved ? The Apostle shows that they who thus taught the Christian converts desired to rob them of the liberty of the Gospel, and to bring them again under the "bondage" of the law, from which they had been freed by the Gospel of the grace of God : that thus to engraft Christianity on Judaism was to "pervert the Gospel of Christ." It is easy to see how dangerous and subtle an error was thus attempted to be introduced into the Church. How does the Apostle meet and expose this error ? Fully convinced that the direct tendency of this error was to lead the Christian converts to a self-righteous reliance on Jewish ordinances, and call off their reliance on Christ alone for justification, he faithfully warns them against it :—"Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again

* 1 Cor. ix. 1, 2.

† Gal. i. 11, 12.

‡ Eph. iii. 2—8.

to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law, *ye are fallen from grace* * Plainly intimating that by submitting to circumcision and the observance of Jewish rites, in order to be saved, they rejected Christ as the only Saviour, and the doctrine of salvation by grace, "ye are fallen from grace." He shows, then, that the Gospel which they had embraced had freed them from the "bondage" of Jewish ordinances; that they needed them not, seeing they enjoyed under the Gospel those "good things to come," of which Jewish ordinances and rites were only "shadows" and types. He exhorts them to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, and not to be entangled again with the yoke of bondage." † It is to be observed how the Apostle, in exposing the error attempted to be brought in by these Jewish teachers, urges the great and distinguishing doctrine of the Gospel, of the sinner's *justification by the alone merits of Christ by faith*, as superseding all other methods of justification. This was the great argument by which he exposed the vanity of all that self-righteous dependence which this Jewish system tended to set up and establish in the Church, and which, in the degree in which it has prevailed, has "perverted the Gospel of Christ." "Knowing," he says, "that a man is not justified by works of law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even *we* have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by works of law; for by works of law shall no flesh be justified." ‡ The same argument the Apostle urges in addressing the Colossian Church:—"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. *Ye are complete in Him*: in whom

* Gal. v. 2—4.

+ Gal. v. 1.

† Gal. ii. 16.

also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." * The idea of the Apostle here clearly is, that, seeing they had been enabled by Christ to do that which the legal rite of circumcision signified—to renounce sin, they should not be induced by any plausible teaching to submit to the circumcision of the flesh, as if it was needful to their salvation. All that was needful to their salvation they had in Christ: "*Ye are complete in Him!*" As if he said, "Ye have no need of any aid from the philosophy of Greece, or the alleged merit of Jewish circumcision and ordinances insisted on by Judaizing teachers; all that is necessary to secure your salvation is to be found in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose death is a sufficient atonement for your sins, and whose merits, relied on by faith, is all-sufficient for your justification and eternal life." It will at once be seen how efficacious this argument was for the refutation and overthrow of that system of self-righteousness, craftily brought into the Apostolic Church to "pervert the Gospel of Christ."

This argument, by which the Apostle exposed the vanity and dangerous consequences of the error of the Jewish teachers of his day, is equally powerful and fitted to expose and refute similar errors in the present day. It is to be remarked how ancient errors, though under different forms, have been, and still are, revived in the Church. The unsubdued pride of the human heart, the setting up of tradition in the place of God's Word, the substitution of religion merely ritual for the spiritual religion of the heart, and reliance on these things instead of an entire submission of the soul to God's revealed plan of salvation by grace, will be found to be the fruitful source of all such errors. What the Apostle remarks of some in his days is true now:—"They have a zeal of God, *but not according to know-*

* Col. ii. 8—11.

ledge. For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." * This is true, not only of Popery, but of every system which symbolizes with Popery. Is not this painfully exhibited among us in the belief of the inherent efficacy and merit of sacraments, *ex opere operato*; in the importance attached to the observance of "days and seasons," and in the performance of rites and ceremonies? Is not the error in these cases the same, and of the same tendency, with that which the Judaizing teachers sought to introduce into the Apostolic Church? In both cases, the tendency of such teaching was to "pervert the Gospel of Christ"—to lead to dependence on what is merely *external* and *ritual* in religion, to the neglect of dependence on the justifying righteousness of the Saviour, "without which we cannot be saved."

* Rom. x. 2, 3.

CHAPTER VIII.

TIMES OF REFRESHING IN THE RAPID SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL, AND ITS TRIUMPHS IN THE DAYS OF CONSTANTINE.

THE rapid and extensive spread of the Gospel is justly looked upon as evidence of its divinity. "If this counsel or this work be of man, it will come to nought ; but, if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it."* To estimate adequately the force of this evidence, we must take into account the character of Christianity, the opposition it encountered, and the sources from which that opposition arose. Christianity is spiritual and holy ; it was, therefore, and ever will be, antagonistic to the idolatry, the superstition, and the prevailing vices of mankind. The obscurity and meanness of the original propagators of it were not likely to propitiate popular favour in its behalf. Yet, notwithstanding all this, and in spite of all the might and activity of opposing powers, the Gospel everywhere spread and triumphed. There was a Divine life and power inherent in Christianity, before which the effete and withering systems of idolatry proved powerless. It was the

* Acts v. 38.

holy leaven cast into the mass of humanity, which, notwithstanding the force of counteracting elements, gradually diffused its quickening influence, and will continue to do so till the whole is leavened. As the natural sun chases away darkness from whole regions of the earth, so, with analogous rapidity, the light of the Gospel dispelled the moral darkness which covered the nations, that, by the close of the second century, Christianity had become more widely diffused than any one of the systems of false religion then in existence. How rapidly and widely the Gospel had spread even in the days of the apostles, we may learn from the words of St. Paul to the Colossians:—"The truth of the Gospel," he says, "is come unto you, *as it is in all the world*, and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth." * One passage from Tertullian, who lived towards the close of the second century, affords confirmation of this. "In whom," says he, in his apology for the religion of Christ, addressed to its persecutors, "have all nations believed, but in Christ, who lately came? In whom have all these nations believed?—*i. e.*, Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, Armenia, Phrygia, Cappadocia, the inhabitants of Pontus, and Asia, and Pamphylia; they that dwell in Egypt, and they who live in Africa beyond Cyrene; Romans and strangers; Jews, and of other nations in Jerusalem; the various sorts of

* Col. i. 5, 6.

people in Getulea ; the many countries of the Moors ; all the borders of Spain ; the different nations of Gaul ; and those parts of Britain which the Romans could not reach, even they are subject to Christ ; the Sarmata, also, and Daci, the Germans and Scythians ; and many other obscure nations, with many provinces and islands scarcely known to us ; in all these, the name of Christ, lately as He came, reigns."

There was a wonderful providential preparation made for this rapid and extensive spread of the Gospel. The extension and triumphs of the Grecian empire under Alexander and his successors, of its language and literature, and especially of the Jewish Scriptures in the Septuagint Version in that language ; the favour shown to the Jews, widely dispersed among the nations ; the multiplication of their synagogues, and the tolerance shown to their worship wherever they were settled, could not fail to spread the light of the knowledge of the true God and of that *truth* which every system of polytheism and philosophy had failed to impart to the anxious inquiries of mankind. This providential preparation for the spread of the Gospel becomes the more striking and manifest when we contemplate the rise, spread, and consolidation of the mighty empire of Rome on the decadence and breaking up of the Grecian power. "If," as is remarked, "we would admire the workmanship of Him who ordereth all things for the advancement of his own counsels, we shall never be more struck with wonder at his providential wisdom

than when we contemplate the raising up of this vast empire in connexion with the appearance of the promised Saviour. Had the eye of mere worldly wisdom looked on the disjointed and quivering fragments of the Alexandrine empire, and glanced aside to the ancient sayings and venerated prophecies, now so nearly accomplished, what could it have foreseen but the career of some bright and swift conqueror, who should bind up again with a new spell those broken parts, founding, and arranging, and infusing into the whole the elements of stability and order? We know, indeed, that very similar to this was the expectation of the Jews, and, we may reasonably infer, of the great mass of those who looked for a Deliverer of the human race. Meanwhile, an empire arises, extensive as the most sanguine expectations could anticipate, binding together and ordering wheresoever its power extended. But this empire is distinguished by its marked defect in all the particulars which might be supposed to accompany the career of a conquering Messiah. In its constitution at the time of Christ's life upon earth we observe no facilities for individual exaltation, no encouragement afforded, and, which is scarcely less important, no strong opposition offered, to one mode of faith or worship as compared with another. Its office was to break down, to grind in pieces, to reduce to one level: in political government it was rigid, in inspection, vigilant; the peace which the fear and dread of it spread over the world was not outward only: religion and philosophy also

were in a state of abeyance and suspense ; and till any new society of religionists advanced its influence into political consequence, it would be viewed by the ruling power with indifference, and its members protected in their just rights.

“ It is even such a state of the natural world for which the anxious husbandman prays when now his seed has been committed to the ground, and the tender plants are about to arise, that the fierce sun and the biting frost may be withheld, that the winds may not blow, nor the floods beat ; but that, in the calm of heaven, and the cool nurture of the earth, the precious blade may advance through its days of weakness and danger. Even so did the all-wise God provide for the coming of Him who was to spring up before Him as a tender plant ; so ordering the unruly wills and affections of sinful men, that the state of the outer world fostered, by its tranquillity and just government, the being and increase of his infant Church ; and the character of men’s minds, from many concurrent causes, was eminently adapted to receive a new infusion of enlightening knowledge and strengthening principle.” *

Under these preparatory and protective circumstances, and the tolerance of every mode of religious belief and worship for a time by the Roman Government, it will be manifest that the wide dispersion of

* Hulsean Lectures (1842), by Rev. H. Alford, B.D., Dean of Canterbury.

the Jews and of their Scriptures must have spread true religious knowledge widely through the empire, and thus prepared the way for the preaching of the Gospel. Let this be viewed in connexion with the wonders of the Day of Pentecost, and it will account, in great measure, for that great gathering together of "Jews and *proselytes*" in the Jewish capital at that great festival of the Jewish religion from all parts of the Roman empire. These, on their return to their respective countries, would everywhere make known the wonders and miracles wrought in confirmation of Christianity; and thus the way would be prepared for the first preachers of the Gospel. The gift of tongues conferred on the apostles, as it gave them the ability to preach in every language of the people where they went, would be a mighty auxiliary to them in their work, as to every people and in every country it would attest the divinity of their mission and of their message. To this may be added what Neander remarks:—"The great highways by which the knowledge of the Gospel was to be diffused abroad had already been opened by the intercourse of nations. The easy means of intercommunication within the vast Roman empire; the close relation between the Jews dispersed through all lands and those at Jerusalem; the manner in which all parts of the Roman empire were linked in with the great capital of the world; the connexion of the provinces with their metropolitan towns; and the larger portions of the empire with the more considerable cities,—were all

circumstances favourable to this object. These cities, such as Alexandria, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, were centres of commercial, political, and literary correspondence ; and hence, also, the principal seats chosen for the propagation of the Gospel, where the first preachers tarried longest. Commercial intercourse, which had served from the earliest times, not merely for the exchange of worldly goods, but also for transmitting the noble treasures of mind, could now be used as a means of diffusing the highest spiritual blessings."

. But the Gospel was not suffered to spread unopposed. The first and most malignant form of opposition, as we have evidence from the book of the "Acts of the Apostles," was encountered from the Jews, who, not only in Judæa, but in every city and place where they were settled, stirred up the violence of the people against it. Though from indifferentism the Roman Government, for a time, proved tolerant and protective, at length when it began to be felt that the new religion, spreading through the empire with such marvellous rapidity, was subversive of the universally-spread polytheism, and intolerant of all the prevailing immorality ; the violence of opposition and persecution was called into exercise against it in this quarter also. It soon began to be seen and felt, in all classes of the community, that there was in the Gospel a disturbing life and power antagonistic, subversive, and condemnatory of all the superstitions and the habits and interests asso-

ciated with them. Wherever the preachers of the Gospel came what was said of them at Athens was felt to be true,—“These who have turned the world upside down are come hither also!” The triumphs of the Gospel demonstrated everywhere that Christianity and Polytheism could not exist together: that the triumph of the one was the destruction of the other. As the Gospel prevailed the temples of the idols were forsaken; the Pagan priesthood was stript of its influence and its gains; the thousands who gained their livelihood by working in the service of their temples and their gods felt that their “craft” was in danger; separations in social life were made between idolaters and Christian converts; and in numerous other ways it was felt that systems idolatrous and demoralizing must fall before the Gospel if suffered to spread and triumph unimpeded and unopposed. We wonder not that all classes, rulers and people, were soon aroused to oppose the Gospel, and persecute all who professed it; and that persecution began to be *legalized* by the State. Nero, as was to be expected from one so infamous in character, was the first emperor to legalize this policy. During the first four centuries ecclesiastical history records no less than ten persecutions, in which all the might of the Pagan Roman Empire was employed to extirpate Christianity and its professors. Hundreds of thousands of the faithful witnesses and confessors of Christ sealed their love of the Gospel by a martyr’s sufferings and death. They had “trials of cruel mockings and

scourgings; yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment; they were stoned, were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, and tormented (of whom the world was not worthy); they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.”* Yet in the face of all this might and cruelty of persecution the Gospel spread and triumphed, justifying the remark of Tertulian,—“*The blood of the martyrs became the seed of the Church.*”

It is interesting here to remark, that at an early stage of this long period of persecution of the Church the sublime revelations, which he records in the Book of the Apocalypse, were granted to St. John in the Isle of Patmos. According to the best information we have, St. John lived at the time of the great and cruel persecution of the Church towards the close of the reign of the Emperor Domitian, by whose order he was banished to the desolate Isle of Patmos, in the Ægean Sea, “for the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.”† The Apocalypse is supposed to have been written about the year A.D. 96, and was designed and well adapted for the instruction and consolation of the Church then enduring the fury of imperial persecution. Looked at from this point of view, how full of consolation was it to the faithful and suffering witnesses and martyrs for Christ at that time! Here, as in a

* Heb. ii. 36–38.

† Rev. i. 9.

chart, in a succession of symbolic visions, was presented to view the history of the Church to the end of time; the watchful care of its Great Head over her; his infinite wisdom and love in overruling and rendering subservient to her best interests all events; the future overthrow and destruction of all her oppressors; the final and universal triumphs of his kingdom in the world; and the glories of heaven, which will crown and recompense the sufferings of those who proved faithful to Christ and his Gospel. Regarded in this light, what a force and emphasis of meaning is there in all the exhortations, warnings, promises, and prophecies contained in this wonderful book! In those ages of darkness and suffering, through which the Church of Christ had to pass, has this book sustained the faith and hope of the suffering Church, and pointed with certainty to the future triumphs and glories of the kingdom of the Saviour and of all his faithful followers.

But we hasten to "times of refreshing" and days of triumph in the time of *the Emperor Constantine*. It was in the dark times of the Diocletian persecution (A.D. 303), when the cries of the suffering Church arose to God for deliverance, it pleased God to raise up a deliverer in Constantine—the first Christian Emperor. To him, in a certain sense, may be applied the prophetic language used in reference to Cyrus, whom God raised up to deliver the Jews from the Babylonian captivity:—"Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to

Cyrus, whose right-hand I have holden to subdue nations before him ; and I will loose the loins of kings ; I will go before thee and make the crooked places straight ; I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron ; I will give thee the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the Lord, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel.”* Leaving to others the secular history of Constantine we can only notice events which connect with the subject of our present inquiry. The honour of a British birth has been claimed for Constantine, but without sufficient proof. His father, Constantius, ruled over that portion of the Western Empire which comprehended in it Britain and Gaul. It appears from all we learn of him that Constantius, renouncing the polytheism of the day, embraced the knowledge and worship of the true God ; that he ruled with clemency and justice ; that he refused to put in force the persecuting edicts of Diocletian against the Christians, who enjoyed his favour and protection. On the death of his father, who had named him on his death-bed as his successor, Constantine was proclaimed Emperor at York A.D. 306. Thus was given to Britain the distinguished honour of giving the first *Christian* Emperor to the Roman Empire. Five years, however, elapsed before he openly announced himself to be the friend and patron of the

* Isa. xlv. 1—3.

Christian religion. The remarkable events which led to this we must now notice. In the year 311—312 Constantine led his army to Italy against Maxentius, who had usurped the government of Italy and Africa. The great and decisive conflict for empire between Constantine and Maxentius—so eventful in its consequences to Christianity—took place within a few miles of Rome. Paganism and Christianity were here brought into direct collision, and by the issue of the conflict the claims of each are to be tested and decided. Such were the great points at issue, and most momentous would be the results on which ever side victory was declared. It is recorded by Eusebius that Maxentius, who was a persecutor both of Pagans and Christians, in his preparations for the coming conflict, scrupulously observed and practised all the customary Pagan ceremonies usual on such occasions, offering sacrifices to the gods in whom he trusted to give him the victory. On the other side, Constantine, with the imperfect knowledge he had of the true God and of Christianity, felt that he must rely not on an arm of flesh. Full of anxiety, he yet knew not clearly the true God on whom to rely for success. In this state of anxious indecision, we learn from Eusebius, the historian and Christian Bishop of Cesaræa, to whom he related the circumstance on oath, that while in prayer that God would reveal himself to him, at noonday, Constantine beheld in the heavens the sign of a glittering

cross, with the inscription above it, "*By this conquer!*" * Perplexed as to the meaning of this, Constantine affirmed that, during the night, in a dream, Christ appeared to him with the same symbol of the cross he had seen in the heavens, directing him to make a banner after the same pattern, and to use it as the standard to be carried before his army, as a protection against the power of his enemies, and as the pledge of his victory. The Emperor obeyed the command: the Cross, instead of the Roman Eagle, became the standard of his army; he conquered Maxentius and his mighty hosts. Paganism received its decisive and deadly blow: Christianity triumphed, and was acknowledged and established as the religion of the Roman Empire.

This story of the Vision of the Cross is variously regarded by different historians. By those who discard all ideas of the supernatural and the miraculous in the case, it is treated as fabulous, or at least as a delusion of the mind of Constantine. Others, who receive it as a truthful narrative of fact, viewing it, as we should, in connexion with the momentous questions at issue, and their results on the cause of Christianity, look upon it as supernatural and miraculous. In this light Constantine regarded it, whose mind and conduct it influenced accordingly; and so did Eusebius, who received the account from the Emperor several years after, confirmed by his oath. What is there to forbid the belief

* *Τούτῳ νίκα*—*Hoc vince.*

of the special and supernatural interposition of God in this case? Paganism and Christianity are now at issue and in direct conflict for the ascendancy. The final blow inflicted on Paganism, the triumph of Christianity, the deliverance of a suffering and praying Church, are results which seem to call for and to warrant the belief of such a supernatural interposition of Deity. The resemblance between this case, and that of Elijah and the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, is in many respects parallel; in both, the great matter at issue was idolatry and true religion. That which explains and justifies supernatural interposition in the one case, will explain and justify it in the other. They who deny this, to be consistent, must discard the doctrine of a special providence, of which holy Scriptures and the history of the Church furnish abundant and undeniable proof. But if in judging of the truth of this story we take the view of it adopted by others, that the miraculous cross said to have been seen by Constantine was not *real*, but only *imaginary*, we arrive at pretty much the same conclusion. "The Creator of the human mind," as one remarks, "acts upon the human mind, sometimes, as in the case of the prophets of old, by an *impression* more than human: sometimes by continuing and impressing the trains of thought which present themselves by relative suggestion. He thus acts with the mind by the laws of mind; but whenever a thought so arises, and so remains upon the consciousness, the memory, and the

conscience, that permanent change of motive and lasting benefit are the results,—then we are justified in saying, the Holy Spirit of God is present with that mind. This I believe to have been the case when Constantine forsook the worship of Apollo, to whom he had offered in the preceding year; and resolving to become, to the best of his imperfect knowledge, a Christian, he commanded the figure of the cross to supersede the eagle; and in the following year directed that his soldiers should wear the same emblem on their shields and arms.”* What has been remarked of the Vision of the Cross, may be said also of the dream of Constantine the night following. We have the authority of Holy Scripture that God has often made known his will “in a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon man.”† When, as in the case before us, such events are productive of a permanent and beneficial change of motive and action, of great and lasting results in the happiness of mankind and the glory of God, it would savour of infidel scepticism and impiety to deny their supernatural character.

The same remarks will, in a great measure, apply to the triumph of Constantine over Licinius, who ruled the Eastern Empire, which took place a few years after; and which for this reason requires some notice here. Licinius at the first united with Constantine in favouring the Christians; but soon from jealousy of the

* Dr. Townsend's Ecclesiastical History.

† Job xxxiii. 15.

Emperor of the West, from ambition and the influence of the Pagan priesthood, became a cruel persecutor of the Christians. We give the account of this last great struggle of paganism against Christianity in the words of Dr. Townsend:—"Before his death, Licinius came to an open collision with Constantine, and relapsed from appearing to encourage Christianity into avowed Paganism. He ridiculed the devotion of his rival, and gathered round him a train of priests and soothsayers to predict success to his undertakings. He consulted the oracle of Apollo at Miletus, and received a discouraging answer, which he professed, however, to despise; and, in his bitterness against Constantine, ventured upon a measure which, more than any other, must have tended to dispirit and intimidate the Pagans. He called his friends together on the eve of the last decisive battle which was to be fought between the rival forces of paganism and Christianity, and professed to put the cause of the two religions to issue. 'If the Lord be God, follow Him,' said the prophet of Israel, 'but if Baal, then follow him.' 'If this forlorn and obscure God of the Christians,' said Licinius, 'unknown in his origin, as in his existence, overcome so many powerful deities, we will address our prayers to Him; we will yield ourselves to this victorious God; we will build Him altars on the ruin of those which our fathers have raised. But if, as they assured us, our gods on this day signalize their protection over this empire,—if they give the victory to our arms and to

our swords,—we will pursue to the death, and drown in their own blood, a sacrilegious sect which holds them in utter contempt.’ He defied the God of Christianity. He met Constantine at Adrianople, and was defeated. The bold challenge which preceded one battle was followed by the very opposite conduct before that which succeeded. He again rallied some forces, obtained assistance from the barbarians on the frontier, and found himself at the head of a hundred and thirty thousand men. Forgetting the declaration he had made before the battle of Adrianople, that if he was successful he would be a Pagan; if unsuccessful, he would embrace the religion of Constantine his victor, he now had recourse to new divinities, as if he had been betrayed by the former, and gave himself up to the superstitions of magic. He imagined that a divine virtue attached to the standard of the Cross which had lately been adopted by Constantine. He warned his soldiers to avoid the formidable sign, though they were about to fight against it; though they ought to have been incited to attack it, not to flee from it. He desired them to turn away their eyes from it, as there was a magic character in it, that was fatal to him. Having thus addressed the soldiers, in language which by a strange infatuation must appear to have been the most ill-adapted to encourage them, he promised to conduct them through dangers; and caused the images of new unknown gods, neither of Christ nor Jupiter, to be carried before the army. He met

Constantine at Chrysopolis. The shout of the troops of the Christian Emperor terrified the soldiers of Licinius. They fled at the first attack. Fifty-five thousand were killed, or deserted; the remainder surrendered; and thus terminated the battle which closed the more open enmity between Paganism and Christianity." This victory rendered Constantine sole Emperor of the whole of the vast Roman Empire.

The consequences of all this were glorious to the Christian cause. Fully convinced of the truth of Christianity, Constantine not only avowed himself a Christian, but tolerated and at length established it as the religion of the Empire. In a statue of himself, which was set up in the Forum to commemorate his victory over Maxentius, he was represented holding in his right hand a standard, in the shape of a cross, with the inscription beneath it, "*By this salutary sign, the true symbol of valour, I freed your city from the yoke of the tyrant!*" When by his triumph over the apostate and persecuting Licinius he became master of the whole Roman Empire, he attributed all the glory of his success to the true God, whom he thus addressed:—"Be gracious to all thy citizens of the Eastern provinces, who have been worn down by long-continued distress, bestowing on them, through me thy servant, deliverance. And well may I ask this of Thee, Lord of the universe, holy God: for by the leadings of thy hand have I undertaken and accomplished salutary things. Everywhere preceded by *the sign* (the symbol

of the cross), have I led on a victorious army. And if anywhere thy public affairs demand it, I go against the enemy following the same symbol of thy power." This wonderful overthrow of Paganism, triumph and establishment of Christianity, introduced glorious "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord" to the long-oppressed and persecuted Christian Church. We prefer giving the happy results of this mighty civil and religious revolution in the words of another, who thus describes the state of things and feelings exhibited in the Roman Empire after its first Christianization under Constantine :—

"When heathenism had been cast down from its supremacy, and Christianity established in the Roman world, the changes consequent were immense and universal. Now, throughout its vast extent, the *cross*, once so despised, was everywhere in honour, and the preserving and conquering virtue celebrated that everywhere attended it. Now the righteousness of the slaughtered martyrs that had been gathered under the altar was acknowledged in public edicts, and the living confessors restored to their homes in triumph from the mines and dungeons where they were suffering. Now, instead of vaults and catacombs for the sacred assemblies of Christians, and other hiding-places shut out from the light of heaven, to which, like their earlier Christian brethren, they had been reduced during the late persecution, there arose in the cities and towns churches of magnificence, and the ritual

was celebrated with a pomp corresponding. Now, instead of desertions and apostasy from the Christian body, such as had been the case with not a few under the fiery trial, the daily accessions to it were innumerable. Candidates in throngs applied for baptism; and at the Easter and Pentecostal festivals the newly-baptized neophytes, in their white garments, grouped conspicuous around each Christian sanctuary. Now, moreover, under Imperial auspices, the Christian professing Church catholic was gathered for the first time in *Æcumenical Council*. Representatives attended from every province, and nation, and tongue, in the vast Empire. The palace gates were thrown open to the holy delegates. The Emperor bowed in respectful deference before them. If in the use of his power he was to the Church as a nursing father, his behaviour was as respectful as that of a son.

“Can we wonder, then, at the exultation that was felt at this time by many, perhaps by most, that bore the Christian name, or at their high-raised expectations as to the future happy destiny of the Roman, now that it had been changed into the Christian nation? It seemed to them as if it had become God’s covenanted people, like Israel of old; and the expectation was not unnatural—an expectation strengthened by the remarkable tranquillity which, throughout the extent of the now reunited empire, followed almost immediately on Constantine’s establishment of Christianity, that not only the temporal blessings of the ancient Jewish

covenant would thenceforth in no small measure attach to them, but even those prophesied of as appertaining to the latter day. Hence, on the medals of that era, the emblem of the phoenix, all radiant with the rising sunbeams, to represent the empire as now risen into new life and hope, and its legend, which spoke of the happy restoration of the times. Hence, in forgetfulness of all former prognostications of Antichrist and fearful coming evils, the reference by some of the most eminent of their bishops to the latter-day blessedness, as even then about fulfilling. The state of things was such, Eusebius tells us, that it looked like *the very image of the kingdom of Christ*. The city built by the Emperor at Jerusalem, beside the new and magnificent church of the *Holy Sepulchre*—the sacred capital, as it were, to the new empire—might be perhaps, he suggested, the *new Jerusalem*, the theme of so many prophecies. Yet again, on the occasion of the opening of the new church at Tyre, he expressed in the following glowing language, not his own feelings only, but those, we may be sure, of not a few of the congregated Christian ministers and people that heard him :—‘ What so many of the Lord’s saints and confessors before our time desired to see and saw not, and to hear and heard not, that behold now before our eyes ! It was of us the Prophet spake, when he told how the wilderness and the solitary place should be glad, and the desert rejoice and blossom as the lily. Whereas the Church was widowed and desolate, her children have now to

exclaim to her, "Make room—enlarge thy borders—the place is too strait for us!" The promise is fulfilling to her, "In righteousness shalt thou be established; all thy children shall be taught of God, and great shall be the peace of thy children." ' ' ' *

These truly were to the Church "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord;" and as always happens when God in mercy visits his Church with a revival of religion and the outpouring of his Spirit, the Gospel spreads more widely and triumphs more gloriously. This was the case during the reign of Constantine. Not only did the Gospel spread over the Roman Empire, but its triumphs extended over many of the neighbouring nations. Paganism lingered on for a time. The final blow was inflicted on Paganism by the Emperor Theodosius, who ascended the throne A.D. 379. This Emperor published, thirteen years after, a law, to the effect, "that no one, of whatever rank, or dignity, or fortune, whether hereditary or acquired, high or humble, in what place or city soever he may dwell, shall slay a victim to senseless images; or, while he addresses in private expiation the Lar, the Genius, and the Penates, with fire, or wine, or odours, light torches, or burn incense, or suspend garlands in their honour; but if any one shall immolate a victim in sacrifice, or consult the panting entrails, that any man may become his informer, until he receive the competent punishment," &c. Polytheism and all its

* Elliott, "Horræ Apocalypticæ," Vol. i., pp. 228, 229.

rites thus received its final overthrow. Whatever of it remained in the Roman Empire was confined to the small obscure towns and villages (or *pagi*). About this time the name *Pagan* (or Rustic Villager) was used to designate such as adhered to Polytheism, the ancient religion.*

* It is foreign to the object of this work to introduce matters of controversy; but the candid reader will forgive the writer in a brief notice of some opinions expressed in reference to the period of Church history to which attention has been drawn. Constantine has been said by some to have exceeded his rightful authority in thus putting down polytheism, and *establishing* Christianity as the religion of the empire. On this subject, it will be sufficient here to quote the words of Elliott:—"The duty of a Christian Sovereign to favour, promote, and establish Christianity in his dominions seems clear, being the same, only on a larger scale, as that of a Christian head of a family. Would they who speak against Constantine's establishment and patronage of the Christian Church carry out their principle, *bonâ fide*, in their own families? Then, if the duty be clear, to argue from the evil resulting is evidently unsound argument. It is arguing from the *abuse* of a thing, right and good in itself. It is allowed—and the three first centuries have shown it—that the Church flourishes best under persecution, and least under prosperity. But would Constantine, arguing *from results*, have been right in persecuting?"* Would not the records of Holy Scripture, of the Divine approbation of Jewish princes in suppressing idolatry, and authoritatively favouring and establishing true religion among their people, coupled with the conviction he had of the Divine truth of Christianity, and of its necessity

* Elliott's "Horæ Apocalyptiæ," note, p. 241, vol. i.

and benefit to his subjects, fully justify and require this of Constantine? Some who urge this objection contend that the divisions, the secularity, and other corruptions which prevailed in the Christian Church, are to be traced to this *establishment* of Christianity, and to its patronage by the State. This is to reason from the *abuse* of a thing, good and right in itself. The abuses and evils alleged should rather be sought for in principles and passions deeply-seated in fallen humanity, and which were fully and painfully manifested *before the time of Constantine*, and while the Church was passing through the fiery ordeal of Pagan persecution. "We have affirmed," says Mr. Taylor, in his work on Spiritual Despotism, "and do not anticipate contradiction from those who themselves are conversant with the existing documents of Church history, that the spiritual despotism, afterwards brought to a centre and made coherent in the Papacy, had developed every one of its essential principles before the time of that political revolution which gave to the Church the aids of Imperial patronage; and while every movement was purely spontaneous, or, in other words, while this power stood on the ground of spiritual motives, and stayed itself altogether on the fulcrum of opinion." "Let no one," says Dr. Pye Smith, a Nonconformist and no advocate of a religious Establishment, "let no one repeat with servile credulity the twenty-times-told cry, that the Christian religion flourished in extraordinary purity and power, and shone brightly in the beauty of holiness, till it was adopted and incorporated into the imperial institution by Constantine. From the days of the apostles themselves it began to be invaded and perverted; and, after the death of the apostle John, the departures from scriptural purity were rapid and fearful. Besides dangerous errors in the primary doctrines of the Gospel, we find many corruptions in discipline and order long before the close of the third century. Observances and ceremonies snatched up from the abrogated Judaism, and even imitations of heathen rites, were

obtruded upon Christians. Ambition, usurpation, and the love of worldly pomp, showed themselves in many ways. Efforts to obtain dominion were zealously made; and the spirit of persecution was displayed among the primitive pastors and their Churches." It is not just, then, to attribute to the establishment of Christianity by Constantine evils and abuses of such wide-spread influence, which existed and operated so injuriously to true Christianity *before* that time. We conclude this note in the words of Dean Waddington:—

"It is the favourite opinion of most sceptical writers, that Christianity is entirely indebted for its general propagation and stability to the Imperial patronage of Constantine: it is another, that the Establishment of the Church led to the disunion of its members, and its prosperity to its corruption. The first of those theories is falsified by the history of the three first centuries, during which we observe the religion to have been gradually but rapidly progressive throughout the whole extent of the Roman empire, in spite of the persecution of some emperors, the suspicious jealousy of others, and the indifference of the rest. The second of their assertions has a greater show of truth, but is, in fact, almost equally erroneous. A fairer view of that question, and, if we mistake not, the correct view, is the following;—the *establishment* of the Church was in itself highly beneficial, both to the progress of religion and the happiness of society, the mere pacific alliance of that body with the State was fraught with advantages to the whole empire, with danger to no member of it. Many evils, indeed, did follow it, and many vexations were inflicted by Christians on each other in the perverse zeal of religious controversy. But such controversies, as we have sufficiently shown, had existed in very great abundance very long before Christianity was recognised by law; and the vexations were not at all the necessary consequences of that recognition. They originated, not in the system itself, but in the blindness of those who administered it: they

proceeded from the fallacious supposition—that which afterwards animated the Romish Church, and which has misled despots and bigots of every age—that unanimity in religious belief and practice was a thing attainable; and they were conducted on a notion equally remote from reason, that such unanimity, or even the appearance of it, could be attained by force. Many ages of bitter experience have been necessary to prove the absurdity of these notions, and the fruitless wickedness of the measures proceeding from them. But a candid inquirer will admit that they were not at all inseparably connected with the establishment of the Church, and that that body would not only have continued to exist and to flourish, without any interference of civil authority to crush its adversaries, but that it would have subsisted in that condition with more dignity, and more honour, and much more security. The prosperity of the Church was unquestionably followed by an increase in the number and rankness of its corruptions. But, unhappily, we have already had occasion to observe, that several abuses had taken root in all its departments, during at least that century which immediately preceded the reign of Constantine. To the fourth we may undoubtedly assign the extravagant honours paid to martyrs, and the shameful superstitions which arose from them. But we should also recollect, that many among the Romish corruptions are of a much later date, and that several may be directly referred to the influence of expiring Paganism—not to the gratuitous invention of a wealthy and degenerate priesthood. Indeed, we should add, that in respect to the moral character of the clergy of the fourth century, they seem rather chargeable with the narrow, contentious, sectarian spirit which was encouraged and inflamed by the capricious interference of the civil power, than with any flagrant deficiency in piety and sanctity of life.”

CHAPTER IX.

TIMES OF REFRESHING, IN THE DAYS OF AUGUSTINE.

THE corruptions of Christianity, and the variety of heresies and sects, which disturbed the unity of the Church during the first five centuries, to many appear mysterious and inexplicable. To enter fully on this subject is not our design. We can only notice some of the more prominent causes. Christianity is designed to make all who truly embrace it of "one mind," and to unite them into "one body," "till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."* The standard of truth is *one* and *divine*, and demands the submission of all who embrace it to a cordial belief of its doctrines and duties. The effect of

* Eph. iv. 13—15.

this will be unity in faith, in feeling, and in practice. We have a lovely picture of this in the primitive Church at Jerusalem, gathered and nurtured by the ministry of the Apostles.* It is painful to contemplate how soon disturbing elements came into operation, to mar the purity and destroy the unity of the Church of Christ. These *gradually* developed themselves, and more fully when Christianity, after passing through the fiery ordeal of persecution, had gained to itself favour and patronage. It is not sufficient to trace this to the independence and spontaneity of the human mind, or to the passions by which mankind are influenced. There are *special* causes to be assigned for this state of things.

One great cause of the diversity of belief and of sects which divided the early Church, will be found in the difference of nationality and in the temperament and habits of thinking of the dissidents. This has been already remarked as to those who had been brought over from Judaism to Christianity in the Apostles' days. Such viewed Christianity through a *Jewish* medium, and sought to engraft upon it Jewish notions and observances. They looked upon Christianity as a more spiritual and fuller developed phase of Judaism, rather than as the *completion* and *abrogation* of it. Hence arose those notions in the Apostolic Church against which St. Paul so earnestly protested, as subversive of the faith and catholicity of the Chris-

* Acts ii. 41—47.

tian Church. The same may be said of the Grecian and Roman nations, which divided among them the civilization of the world. Their views and reception of the Gospel took a character and colouring from what may be denominated the individuality, the peculiar temperament and habit of thinking, of each nation. "The origin of these disputes," Dean Waddington observes, "may be traced without any exception to the restless imaginations of the East. The violent temperament of Orientals, as it was highly adapted to the reception of religious impressions, and admitted them with fervour and earnestness, intermingled so closely passion with piety, as scarcely to conceive them separable. The natural ardour of their feeling was not abated by the natural subtlety of their understanding, which was sharpened in the schools of Egypt; and when this latter began to be occupied by inquiries in which the former were also deeply engaged, and when the nature of those inquiries assumed an indeterminate and impalpable form, it was to be expected that many extravagancies would follow." "The Roman character, on the other hand," as Neander remarks, "was less mobile. It was more fixed, and inclined to be tenacious of old usages. Its tendency was to the practical. Both these mental characteristics will mark the peculiar shaping of Christian doctrine and theology." There was—and it particularly applies to the Greeks—a habit and fondness for metaphysical speculations, for investigation, and disputation. This had been fostered

in their various schools of philosophy, and must have had no small influence on their reception and belief of the Gospel. A careful consideration of all this will go far to account for the variety of opinions and for the various sects which agitated and divided the Christian Church in the first ages of the development of Christianity.

Another fruitful cause of this will be found in the character of the prevailing philosophy of the times, and the unworthy attempts made for an *admixture* of Christianity with the philosophy of the day, and the reconciling of the one with the other. St. Paul foresaw this, and solemnly warned against it when he thus addressed the Church at Colosse:—"Beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."* This warning of the Apostle points out with sufficient distinctness the great *source* of the errors which so early sprang up in the Church—the philosophy, the gnosticism of the East, and the traditions of the Jews. There was an attempt to amalgamate Christianity with both and reconcile it with both, on the part of those who propagated and of those who embraced the Gospel. To this source and to this unworthy compromise may be traced most of the early corruptions of Christianity. The metaphysical disputations and ascetic notions of the Academy, and especially of Platonism, were brought

* Col. ii. 8.

into the Christian Church. The simplicity and supreme authority of revealed truth came to be disregarded. "While men slept, the enemy sowed the tares" of those heresies, which were the *reaction* of principles which had before prevailed, and which it was the design of pure Christianity to uproot and destroy. In this way we may account for the melancholy fact, that in the writings of the early Fathers of the Church may be traced the incipient development of the principal errors and corruptions, afterwards fully developed and incorporated in the creed and system of the Church of Rome.

As the natural sequence of all this, we mark in the teaching of some of the early Fathers of the Church, to a fearful extent, the absence of those essential and fundamental doctrines of Christianity in which its vitality, usefulness, and adaptation to mankind consisted. How soon have we to deplore a departure from "the faith once delivered to the saints!"—the overshadowing of the essential truths of justification by faith, salvation by grace, the sanctification of the Spirit, by superstitious rites, voluntary humiliations, the inherent efficacy of sacraments, the merit of good works, and a pompous and paganized ritual, instead of that spiritual worship which alone is acceptable to God. Need we wonder, then, that the spirit and glory of primitive Christianity gradually disappeared from the Church, and that superstition and error advanced with such rapid and fearful strides?

It is pleasant to turn aside from these gloomy views to contemplate better days and brighter scenes. It pleased God to visit his Church with "times of refreshing." We see this in the days of *Augustine* towards the close of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century. He was raised up, and eminently qualified to be the instrument of a revival of true religion in the Church. Milner, the historian of the Church of Christ, speaks of his time as that in which "God interposed with a second great effusion of his Spirit;" as hardly inferior to that vouchsafed on the day of Pentecost. How far this representation is just will be seen by a slight sketch of the life, labours, and usefulness of Augustine.

Aurelius Augustine was born at Tagista in Numidia, on the 13th November, A.D. 354. His father, Patricius, was a Pagan; but his mother, Monica, was a Christian,—a woman of eminent piety, and manifested great anxiety for the religious training and conversion of her son. In a work which he published, his "*Confessions*," in which he unveils his hidden life, before and after his conversion, he makes frequent references to the piety of his mother, and to her anxiety and prayers on his behalf. Adverting to this, he thus writes, speaking of his early years: "At that time I derided thy holy servants, and was justly exposed to believe most ridiculous absurdities. And Thou sentest thy hand from above, and freedest me from this depth of evil, while my mother was praying for me,

more concerned on account of the death of my soul than other parents for the death of the body. She was favoured with a dream, by which Thou comfortedst her soul with hope of my recovery. She appeared to herself to be standing on a plank, and a person came to her and asked her the cause of her affliction; and, on being answered that it was on my account, he charged her to be of good cheer, for that *where she was there I also should be*. On which she immediately beheld me standing on the same plank. Whence was this, but from Thee, gracious Omnipotent, who takest care of each and all of us as of single persons? When she related this to me I endeavoured to evade the force of it by observing, that it might mean to exhort her to be what I was. Without hesitation, she replied, It was not said where he is thou shalt be, but where thou art there he shall be. Her prompt answer made a stronger impression on my mind than the dream itself. For nine years, while I was rolling in the filth of sin, often attempting to rise, but still sinking deeper, did she in vigorous hope persist in incessant prayer. I remember, also, that she entreated a certain bishop to reason me out of my errors. He was a person not backward to attempt this where he found a docile subject,—‘But your son,’ said he, ‘is too much elated at present and carried away with the pleasing novelty of his error to regard any argument, as appears by the pleasure he takes in puzzling many ignorant persons with his captious questions. Let him alone; only continue

praying to the Lord for him : he will in the course of his study discover his error.' All this satisfied not my anxious parent. With floods of tears she persisted in her request ; when, at last, he, a little out of temper on account of her importunity, said, ' Begone, good woman, *it is not possible that the child of such tears and prayers should perish.*' She has often told me since that this answer impressed her mind like a voice from heaven." Augustine, like many who long resist the influence of pious instruction, had, thus early, the seeds of Christianity implanted in his heart, which, in after years, sprung up and produced a godly and useful life. Though for many years he pursued a course of vanity and sin he could not find true happiness and peace. How often does it happen, and let this encourage such pious mothers as Monica, to continue in their pious efforts and their prayers, that their efforts and their prayers, when they have least ground of hope, are crowned with the blessing of the conversion of their children to God. "*It is not possible,*" as the pious bishop said to Monica, "*that the child of such tears and prayers should perish !*" The father of Augustine, intending him for the profession of a rhetorician, placed him in a grammar-school at Madanza, where he read most of the Latin authors, but discovered an aversion to the study of the Greek. In his sixteenth year he went to Carthage to pursue his studies there, where, led astray by his fellow-students and his own unbridled passions, he indulged in the wildest excesses of youth.

In reference to this period, he writes thus in his "Confessions":—"I came to Carthage, surrounded and agitated with flagitious lusts. After thee, O my God, the true bread of life, I hungered not; and, though famished with real indigence, and longing after that which satisfieth not, I had no desire for incorruptible food, not because I was full of it, for the more empty I was the more fastidious I grew. My sordid passions, however, were gilded over with the decent and plausible appearance of love and friendship. Foul and base as I was, I affected the reputation of liberal and polite humanity. I rushed into the lusts with which I desired to be captivated. My God, my mercy, with how great bitterness didst Thou, in thy extraordinary kindness, mix those vain allurements by which I was miserably enslaved and beaten; for beaten I truly was with all the iron rods of envy, suspicion, fear, indignation, and quarrelling. The spectacle of the theatre, in particular, now hurried me away, full of the images of miseries, and the foundation of my fire. The arts of the forum also engaged my ambition; the more fraudulent the more laudable. Pride and arrogance now elated my soul. Amidst these things, in that imbecility of judgment which attends youth, I studied the books of eloquence with the most ardent desire of vain glory, and in the course of my reading dipped into the Hortensius of Cicero, which contains an exhortation to the study of philosophy. This book was the instrument of effecting

a remarkable change in my views. I suddenly gave up the fantastic hope of reputation by eloquence, and felt a most ardent desire after wisdom. In the meantime I was maintained at Carthage, at my mother's expense, being in the nineteenth year of my age, my father having died two years before. How did I long, my God, to fly from earthly things to Thee, and yet I knew not what thou wert doing with me. At that time, O light of my heart, though I was unacquainted with the apostolic admonition, '*take heed lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit*;' thou knowest what was the sole object of my delight in the Ciceronian volume, namely, that I was vehemently excited by it to seek for wisdom, not in this or that sect, but wherever it was to be found; and the only thing which damped my zeal was, that the name of Christ, that precious name, which from my mother's milk I had learned to reverence, was not there. And whatever was without this name, however just, and learned, and polite, could not wholly carry away my heart. I determined, therefore, to apply my mind to the Holy Scriptures, to see what they were; and I now see the whole subject was impenetrable to the proud, low in appearance, sublime in operation, and veiled with mysteries; and my frame of heart was such as to exclude me from it, nor could I stoop to take its yoke upon me. I had not these sensations when I attended to the Scriptures, but they appeared to me to be unworthy to be compared with the dignity of Cicero.

My pride was disgusted with their manner, and my penetration could not enter into their meaning. It is true, those who are content to be as little children find, by degrees, an illumination of their souls: but I disdained to be a child, and, elated with pride, imagined myself to be possessed with manly wisdom."

While in this state of mind he fell in with the *Manichæans*, whose Society he joined, and whose errors he embraced. These were the followers of the errors of *Manes*, the founder of the sect. They held, in common with the Pagan philosophers, what may be called Pantheistic views: they imagined God to be material, and that He penetrated and pervaded all nature: they admitted two independent principles—good and evil; and in this way attempted to solve the difficult question of the origin of evil. Regardless of Holy Scripture, the authority of which they renounced for the most part, they sought to attain religious knowledge by the efforts of natural reason. For nine years was Augustine led aside by the philosophical subtlety and pride of this sect. During this time he professed rhetoric at Carthage and at Tagasta, and indulged freely in worldly and sinful pleasures. Convinced at length of the errors of Manicheism, and, disgusted with his companions at Carthage, he resolved, contrary to the advice of his pious mother, and without her knowledge, to go to Rome, which he appears to have reached A.D. 383. He had now attained to the age of thirty. Here he joined himself to the Academic

sect of philosophers. His stay in Rome was but for a short time ; for, being disappointed in his plans, and being offered the chair of a Professor of Eloquence at Milan, he removed to that city, where his affectionate mother joined him. Thus, "by a way he knew not," God, who designed to use him as an eminent instrument of good to the Church, brought him under the preaching of Ambrose, the distinguished Bishop of Milan, whose faithful ministry and pious exhortations were the means of his conversion. Here he felt the power of Divine truth, and was led to study the Holy Scriptures as the fountain of truth. He mentions a remarkable circumstance occurring while he was in this anxious state of mind, under deep convictions of his sinfulness and misery, which is best related in his own words. Hearing from his friend Alypius an account of some who had given themselves up to God, he says :—

"In the agitation of my spirit, I retired into the garden belonging to the house, knowing how evil I was, but ignorant of the good thou, O God, hadst in store for me. Alypius followed me, and we sat remote from the house, and, with vehement indignation, I rebuked my sinful spirit because it would not give itself up to God. I found I wanted a will. Still was I restrained, and Thou, in secret, wast urgent upon me with severe mercy. Vanities of vanities, my old mistresses, shook my vesture of flesh, and whispered, Are we to part?—and for ever? The evil suggestions which I felt, may thy mercy avert from the soul of thy

servant ! Canst thou live without us ? they said ; but with less and less power. On the other hand appeared the chaste dignity of Continence. Canst thou not, said she, perform what many of both sexes have performed, not in themselves, indeed, but in the strength of the Lord ? Cast thyself on Him ; fear not, He will not suffer thee to fall. Turn a deaf ear to the suggestions of the flesh ; they speak of pleasure, but not as the law of thy God. Such was my internal conflict. When deep meditation had collected all my misery into the view of my heart, a great storm arose, producing a large shower of tears. To give it vent, I rose up hastily from Alypius. The sound of my voice appeared pregnant with weeping, and he remained motionless in the same place. I prostrated myself under a fig-tree, and, with tears bursting out, I spake to this effect :—How long, Lord, wilt thou be angry ? For ever ? Remember not my old iniquities ; for I perceived myself entangled by them. How long shall I say ?—to-morrow ? Why should not this hour put an end to my slavery ? Thus I spake, and wept in the bitterness of my soul ; and I heard a voice, as from a neighbouring house, repeating frequently, ‘ *Take up and read !—take up and read !* ’ I paused, and began to think whether I ever had heard boys use such a speech in any play, and could recollect nothing like it. I then concluded that I was ordered from heaven to take up the book, and read the first sentence I cast my eye upon. I returned hastily to the place where

Alypius was sitting, for there I had placed the book of St. Paul's Epistles. I seized it, opened, and read what first struck my eyes:—'*Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.*' Nor did I choose to read anything more; nor had I occasion. Immediately at the end of this sentence, all my doubts vanished. I closed the book, and, with a tranquil countenance, gave it to Alypius. He begged to see what I had read. I showed him it, and he read still further: * '*Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye;*' which he applied to himself, as he told me. With a placid serenity and composure suitable to his character, in which he far excelled me, he joined with me in going to my mother, who now triumphed in the abundant answers given to her petitions. Thus didst Thou turn her mourning into joy! ”*

Writing again on this happy change, he says:—“O Lord, I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid. Thou hast broken my bonds in sunder. Let my heart, and tongue, and all my bones say, Lord, who is like unto thee? And do thou answer me, and say unto my soul, I am thy salvation! Who and what am I?—what evil am I not? Was it my will, or words, or deeds that have done it? No; but thou, Lord, good and merciful, by thy powerful right hand,

* Rom. xiii. end, and xiv. beginning.

† “Confessions,” book viii.

delivered me from the depths of misery, and thoroughly cleansed the very bottom of my heart of all its corruptions. The whole of my evil lay in a will stubbornly set in opposition to thine. But where lay my free-will of old time, and from what deep secret was it called out in a moment, by which I bowed my neck to thy easy yoke, and my shoulders to thy light burden, Christ Jesus, my helper and Redeemer? How sweet was it in a moment to be free from those delightful vanities, to lose which had been my dread, to part with which was now my joy! Thou ejectedst them, O my true and consummate delight! and thou enteredst in their room. O sweeter than all pleasure!—but not to flesh and blood; clearer than all light!—but to the inner man; higher than all honour!—but not to those who are high in their own conceits. Now was my soul set free from the corroding cares of avarice and ambition and lust, and I conversed familiarly with Thee, my light, my riches, my Saviour, and my God!” *

Soon after his conversion he resigned the chair of Rhetoric at Milan, and retired to a country seat at Cassiciacum, the country seat of his friend Verecundus, where he spent his time in meditation, writing, and preparation for the ordinance of Christian baptism, which he afterwards received from Ambrose at Milan. Soon after, he resolved to return to Africa, visiting Rome on his way, where he remained some time. At

• “Confessions,” book ix.

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Ostia, about this time, he lost his pious mother, Monica, to whose prayers and instructions he was so largely indebted. His reflections on this event are of too affecting a character to be omitted in this sketch of his life :—

“We determined,” he says, “to return to Africa ; and, when we were at the mouth of the Tibur, my mother departed this life. I must not pass by the conceptions of my soul concerning her, who endured labour for my temporal birth, and laboured in heart for my spiritual birth. After her marriage with my father, Patricius, she endeavoured to win him over to thy service, O God, by the amiableness of her manners, and patiently bore the injuries of his unfaithfulness. She still looked for thy mercy, that, learning to believe in Thee, he might become chaste. His temper was passionate, but his spirit benevolent. She knew how to bear with him when angry, by a perfect silence and composure ; when she saw him cool, would meekly expostulate with him. At length, in the extremity of life, she gained her husband to Thee, and he died in the faith.

“It was through thy secret appointment that she and I stood alone at a window facing the East, in a house at the mouth of the Tibur, where we were preparing ourselves for our voyage. Our discourse was highly agreeable, and, forgetting the past, we endeavoured to conceive aright the nature of the eternal

life of the saints. It was evident to us, that no carnal delights deserved to be named on this subject; erecting our spirits more ardently, we ascended above the noblest parts of the material creation to the consideration of our own minds, and, passing above them, we attempted to reach heaven itself, to come to thee, by whom all things were made. There our hearts were enamoured, and there we held fast the first-fruits of the Spirit, and returned to the sound of our own voice, which gave us an emblem of the Divine Word. We said if the flesh, the imagination, and every tongue should be silenced, for they proclaim, *we made not ourselves, but He who remaineth for ever*; if these things should now hold their peace, and God alone should speak, not by any emblems, or created things, but by himself, so that we could hear his Word; should this be continued, and other visions be withdrawn, and this alone seize and absorb the spectator for ever, is not this the meaning of '*Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord?*' At that moment the world appeared to us of no value; and she said, 'Son, I have now no delight in life. What I should do here, and why I am here, I know not, the hope of this life being quite spent. One thing only, your conversion, was an object for which I wished to live. My God has given me this in larger measure. What do I here?' Scarce five days after she fell into a fever. A brother of mine, who was with us, lamented that she was likely to die in a foreign land. She looked

at him with anxiety, to see him so grovelling in his conceptions, and then looking at me, said, 'Place this body anywhere; do not distress yourselves concerning it.' I could not but rejoice, and give thee thanks, that she was delivered from that anxiety, with which I knew she always had been agitated, in regard to a sepulchre which she had provided for herself, and prepared near the body of her husband. I knew not the time when this void had been filled by the fulness of thy grace, but I rejoiced to find this evidence of it. I heard afterwards, that while we were at Ostia, she had discoursed with some friends, in my absence, concerning the contempt of life, and they, expressing their surprise that she did not fear to leave her body so far from her own country, 'Nothing,' said she, 'is far to God, and I do not fear that He should not know where to find me at the resurrection.' She departed this life on the ninth day of her illness, in the fifty-sixth year of her age, and the thirty-third of mine." *

We add one more extract as affording delightful evidence of the spiritual change of heart which Augustine had experienced, and of his advancement in spirituality:—

"Now Lord, my groaning testifies that I am displeased with myself; but thou art light and pleasure, and art loved and desired, that I may blush for myself, and renounce myself, and choose thee; and neither

* "Confessions," Book ix.

attempt to please thee, nor myself, but by depending on thee. For when I am wicked, then I confess to thee is no other thing than to be displeased with myself; and when godly, this is nothing else, but to confess that thou affordest that gift to me. The confessions of my past evils, which thou hast forgiven, changing my mind by faith and thy baptism, when they are read and heard, excite the heart, that it sink not in despair, but may watch in the love of thy mercy and the sweetness of thy grace, by which the weak, brought to feel his own weakness, is made strong. But what advantage will result from my confessing, as I now propose, not what I was, but what I now am? I will discover myself to such as will rejoice over me for what is good, and will pray for me and sympathize with me in regard to what is evil, more secure as I am, through thy mercy, than my innocence. I am a little child, but my Father ever lives, and is my sufficient guardian. My temptations I can, or cannot resist, I know not. But my hope is this, that thou art faithful, that thou dost not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but with the temptation also makest a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it. Lord, I love thee; thou hast smitten my heart with thy word, and I have loved thee. But what do I love when I love thee?—not the heavens and the earth, nor any created beauty. They cry aloud,—We are not God, He made us. Where shall I find thee, but in thyself, above me? Too late did I love thee, thou

primæval beauty. Thou calledst aloud, and overcame my deafness; thou didst shine forth, and dispelledst my darkness. Thou wast fragrant, and I panted after thee. I tasted, and hungered and thirsted after thee: thou touchedst me, and I was inflamed into thy peace. When I shall cleave wholly to thee, I shall no more have pain or fatigue, and my whole life shall live full of thee. But now, because thou supportest him whom thou fillest, because I am not full of thee, I am a burden to myself. My wholesome griefs and pernicious pleasures contend together, and I know not on which side the victory stands. Woe is me! Thou art my physician, I am sick. Thou art merciful, I am wretched. All my hope lies in thy immense mercy. Give what thou commandest, and command what thou wilt. Thou commandest us to keep from the lust of the flesh, from the lust of the eyes, and from the pride of life; and what thou commandest, thou hast given me. Yet there live in my memory the images of evils, to which I had been habituated, and they occur to me even in sleep. Is not thy hand, O God, able to heal all the diseases of my soul, and to sanctify even the hours of rest? I would rejoice with trembling in what thou hast given me, and mourn over that which is imperfect, and hope that thou wilt perfect thy mercies when death shall be swallowed up in victory." *

The previous narrative shows the value and efficacy

* "Confessions," Book x.

of pious parental instruction and prayers. How much, under God, did Augustine owe to the piety of his mother Monica! In the last day, "when the Lord shall count, and write up the people,"* a large proportion will be found to have been the children of early and earnest pious instructions and prayers. It is not too much to affirm, of these will be found those who, in every age, have been most eminent for piety and usefulness in the Church of Christ. Let, then, pious mothers, like Monica, diligently sow the seeds of pious instruction in the hearts of their children and water them with their prayers; these will be the incipient germs of spiritual life hereafter to be developed; they may appear to lay buried and dormant for years, but they are not dead, but secretly working, to restrain from evil, to give activity to conscience and to bless; and in an hour they expect not, will bring forth fruit to glorify God and to bless the Church and the world. How precious and encouraging to pious mothers the words of the Bishop to Monica,—"*It is not possible that the son of such tears and prayers should perish!*" What "a time of refreshing" and joy to Monica was that in which she witnessed the conversion of her son to God! What a refreshing and joy to her spirit in the near approach of death, as they stood and conversed together at the window at Ostia, when she said, "One thing only, your conversion, was an object for which I wished to live—my God has given me this!" How

* Ps. lxxxvii. 6.

true are the words of holy writ,—“Men ought always to pray, and not to faint;” “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.”*

* Luke xviii. 1 ; Ps. cxxvi. 5, 6.

CHAPTER X.

TIMES OF REFRESHING IN THE DAYS OF AUGUSTINE— *Continued.*

THE Providence of God is to be observed in raising up and preparing instruments for the accomplishment of his own purposes, and the good of his Church. This was eminently the case with Augustine. His active, acute, and vigorous mind,—the mental and spiritual discipline of many years through which he had passed,—fitted him for the time, the circumstances, and special work, for which God had designed him. It was a time of great decay, of vital Christianity, and of growing superstition. Dark clouds, threatening stormy days to the Empire and the Church, were gathering on all sides. At such a time was Augustine raised up to be the champion of *truth*, and become the harbinger of “times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord” to the Church. His great attainments in every branch of knowledge, and the mental struggles of many years between good and evil, till he at length surrendered his heart to God and his truth, and found that true peace and satisfaction, which he had sought in vain in worldly pleasures and philosophy, formed an important

part of the secret and effectual preparation for the great work to which God had called him. The experience of his hidden life prepared him cordially to receive, and spiritually to understand and appreciate, those essential and fundamental doctrines of Divine grace, which it was his delight and labour in after years to vindicate and re-establish in the Church. At the time of his conversion, as already remarked, his attention was directed to the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans. Neander remarks on this:—"The study of St. Paul's Epistles in particular, which he began at this epoch of his life, made the more powerful impression on his soul, because so much in the fundamental idea of these epistles respecting that which is *law*, *spirit*, and that which is *flesh*, and respecting the conflict between both, connected itself with his own inner experience and conflicts, and became clearly evident to him from them. Much that had been unintelligent to him before he had made these experiences he could now understand; and in general, he became better acquainted with Christianity the more he found himself at home in it by means of his own inner life, and the more he experienced the sanctifying power of the Divine doctrines on his own soul." Thus taught by *experience* the doctrines of human depravity, the necessity and efficacy of Divine influence to change the heart and regulate the will and affections,—salvation alone by the free grace of God,—justification by faith through the merits of the Saviour;—how important and how

precious would these doctrines appear, and how prominent would they become in his ministry and writings ! We may add in the words of Milner :—" Is it to be wondered that the Saint before us proved so strong and **zealous** a champion of the effectual grace of God, and was made use of to **revive the clear doctrine** of it in the Church, and was trained up by his own experience to defend it against the subtleties of Pelagius ? He who foresaw what Pelagius would introduce, in his adorable wisdom thus provided an experienced pastor of his Church, who in due time should withstand his corruptions."

After the death of his mother, Augustine returned to Africa, and arrived at Carthage towards the end of A.D. 388, and soon after, with a few companions like-minded with himself, settled at Tagista, his native town. The great change which the grace of God had wrought in him since he left that place was the wonder of all who knew him. In him was seen the truth of the apostle's words :—" If any man be in Christ he is *a new creature* : old things are passed away ; behold, all things are become new." * He sold his family estates, distributed his property to the poor, reserving only what was sufficient to support himself and his companions modestly and economically. The little society at Tagista devoted their time to the study of the Scriptures, to fasting, prayer, and works of charity. This little establishment, regulated by fixed laws, admitting

* 2 Cor. v. 17.

to its privileges a succession of qualified persons, was subsequently converted into a regular monastery, and became famous as a school of clerical education, and a model of similar institutions in various parts of Africa. During the three years passed in this retirement Augustine wrote several works on science and theology. It was not, however, the will of God that this "shining light" should remain hidden at Tagista, but be placed in a more prominent situation to spread the light to the multitudes in darkness. Circumstances soon led the steps of Augustine to Hippo Regius, of which at that time *Valerius* was bishop, who, from his imperfect knowledge of Latin, the language in use in the Church, and from his earnest desire for the spiritual interests of his flock, was desirous of uniting with himself an assistant duly qualified to co-operate with him in the ministry of the Gospel. Augustine, from motives of curiosity attending the election for this purpose, to his great surprise was unanimously chosen. In vain he remonstrated, and pleaded his unfitness for the office; —he was constrained to submit, and, after a short time of retirement, prayer, and preparation, entered on his work at Easter, A.D. 391. *Valerius* regarded the choice of Augustine as a special blessing granted to his flock, in answer to his fervent prayers; and he was to him, during the remainder of his Episcopate, in all respects, a friend and a father. Thus providentially called to the work of the sacred ministry in so important a city as Hippo, his labours were various and

incessant. His earnestness and eloquence drew crowds to the church to hear those precious truths of the Gospel, too much and too long kept in the background, and but little known and valued at that time. We may form some idea of the matter, manner, and effect of his preaching from his own words, when speaking of pulpit eloquence:—"We must not imagine," he said, "that a man has spoken powerfully when he receives much applause. This is sometimes given to low turns of wit, and merely ornamental eloquence. But the sublime overwhelms the mind with its vehemence;—it strikes dumb; it melts into tears. When I endeavoured to persuade the people of Cæsarea, in which, at a certain time of the year, they fought publicly for several days, I said what I could; but for a while hearing only their acclamations, I feared I had done nothing. At last they began to weep; and then I entertained some hope that the horrible custom would be abolished. And though it is now upwards of eight years since that time, they have, through the grace of God, been restrained from the practice ever since." Again, in a "Word on Christian Doctrine," he says:—"Let our Christian orator, who would be understood and heard with pleasure, *pray before he speak. Let him lift up his thirsty soul to God before he open his mouth to the people.*" His labours at Hippo were not confined to his pulpit and various pastoral duties there: he was at the same time as one "set for the defence of the Gospel" against prevailing superstitions and errors,

diligently employing the use of his pen. While a priest at Hippo he composed his books, "De Utilitate Credendi," "De Fide et Symbolo," "De Sermone Domini in Monte," and other important and useful treatises. Having been himself rescued, by the mercy of God, from the Manichean heresy, he applied himself with fidelity and great ability to check the progress of that heresy which at that time was gaining converts in many places. He contended in a public discussion with a Manichean teacher of great note, of the name of Fortunatus, who had come to Hippo, and who had seduced many by his sophistry. The subject of discussion was—whether sin originated in the abuse of free-will, as Augustine maintained; or was natural, and co-eternal with the divine Being, as argued by Fortunatus. His adversary, vanquished by the arguments of Augustine, was obliged, in confusion, to steal away from Hippo, covered with shame and confusion, and thus an effectual check was given to the progress of Manicheism in that city.

In A.D. 395 Augustine was made Bishop of Hippo, conjointly with the aged Valerius, whom, as Presbyter, he had previously and faithfully assisted. In this higher station in the Church he continued to show the same unaffected piety and untiring zeal to maintain the truth of the Gospel, the unity of the Church, and to banish from her all those deadly heresies which had on every hand sprung up. Among his labours, after his elevation to the Episcopate, may be mentioned his

efforts in the defence of the *Trinity* against the Arians, whose heresy was rapidly spreading; and particularly the Donatists, at that time powerful in Africa, between whom and the Church there existed great hostility. About this time, A.D. 411—412, he had to encounter a new class of heretics in the *Pelagians*, now rising in the Church. The importance of this controversy, its alleged British origin, and its results, will require and justify a further notice of it. Baxter, in his "Church History," gives the following succinct account of this new and dangerous heresy:—"Scarcely had the Church thrown off the infection of Arianism, and vindicated the honour of her Redeemer, than she had to maintain the doctrines of grace and the influences of the Holy Spirit against Pelagius, a native of this island, whose British name was probably Morgan. The earlier career of this most plausible of heresiarchs was irreproachable, and his divergence into the paths of error seems traceable to an acquaintance formed in Italy with Ruffinus, who had debased the pure gold of Christianity with a wretched alloy of oriental philosophy. The opinions of Pelagius may be thus briefly stated:—He denied the doctrine of Original Sin, maintaining that the consequences of Adam's transgression were confined to himself, and that his posterity, so far from bringing with them into the world a tendency to evil, entered it with a positive bias on the side of virtue, which only required the knowledge of duty and the exertions of the human will to ensure the very highest attainments in holiness. The

term, divine grace, although freely employed to conciliate popular favour, was found, on searching inquiry, to mean nothing more than either the capacity of doing God's will graciously and universally imparted, the rule of duty graciously propounded, or the reward of obedience graciously promised. Sometimes Divine assistance was spoken of, which those who rightly employed their natural powers might qualify themselves to obtain; but never were the direct influences of God's Holy Spirit recognised in their gratuitous communication, and their absolute necessity to originate and maintain the Divine life in the soul." * Other writers attribute other errors to Pelagius. Spanheim says that, in addition to those enumerated above, the Pelagians taught "that it is of God that we are men, but of ourselves that we are just; that there are three ways of salvation: viz., by the law of nature, by the law of Moses, and by the law of Christ; that the works of the heathen were good and acceptable to God, though performed without the aid of Divine grace; that perfection was attainable in this life: either actual, so that believers did no sin; or possible, that they might live without sin." He adds:—"Other opinions of the Pelagians tended to overthrow the grace of God, and gave rise to many disputes respecting a twofold predestination. To these main points were added others of a minor character, respecting the use and efficacy of

* "History of the Church of England," by J. A. Baxter, M.A.

baptism, that sins of ignorance were not sinful, and that baptized and believing persons were bound to renounce their riches." * This heresy was propagated first in Italy, and extended to Palestine, Africa, and Britain. Doctrines like these, so congenial with man's natural pride and corruption, and so subversive of the doctrine of the grace of God, could not fail to find many recipients wherever they were propagated. They were zealously opposed by many bishops of the Church, and by none more successfully than by Augustine. "Endowed with a clear and powerful intellect, and mighty in the Scriptures, the Bishop of Hippo brought to the contest that deep acquaintance with the obliquities of the human heart, which resulted from painful self-inspection, and the Divine illumination by which alone spiritual things are discerned. The effect was the discomfiture of those who knew not the one and despised the other." Though Pelagianism, principally through the influence of the labours and writings of Augustine, was condemned by the Councils of the Church, and the sect broken up, yet the leaven of this heresy long continued to spread under the specious form of *semi-Pelagianism*. We cannot fail here to remark the providence of God, in raising up the suitable instrument for the defence of evangelic truth for the time of danger in which that truth would be threatened with overthrow, and rendering heresy eventually one of the means of introducing and furthering the

* Spanheim's "Annals," pp. 263, 264.

spread of juster views of the Gospel of grace. Thus the writings of Augustine in refutation of Pelagianism and other heresies, spreading in the Church in his day, were the means blessed of God for maintaining, reviving, and diffusing widely, at that time, and up to the time of the Reformation, those essential doctrines of Divine grace, which have in every age been the life-blood of the Church. In this way, the Church,—especially in Africa,—by the labours of Augustine, was blessed with “times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord,” to prepare the faithful for the times of trouble and darkness near at hand.

We must hasten to the close of this sketch. The closing days and labours of Augustine were overcast with dark clouds, ushering in times of great trouble to the Church and the Empire. The mighty fabric of Roman domination was shaken, and about to be broken in pieces. The Northern nations, by whom the empire was subsequently dismembered, had already fallen upon several of its provinces. In A.D. 410, one division under *Alaric* the Goth had attacked and pillaged Rome, and laid waste, by fire and sword, many parts of Italy. In this fearful state of things it was that Augustine wrote, what is considered one of his greatest works, “*The City of God*.” His object in this masterly production of his pen was to refute the opinion of the Pagans, that the troubles of the empire were the punishment of the gods for the subversion of their altars and worship, and for the spread and establish-

ment of Christianity. At length—A.D. 426—the Vandals, under *Genseric*, their king, after having committed fearful ravages in other parts of the empire, passed over to Africa. It appears that their admission into Africa was favoured by Count Boniface, who had the command of the Roman forces in that province. His treason is said to have been the consequence of some real or supposed slights or insults he had received from the reigning Empress. He returned, however, to a sense of his duty, but too late to avert the calamities which his treachery had brought upon Africa. The Goths in a short time ravaged and desolated the richest districts of that part of the empire. Boniface, with his army, were soon reduced to the necessity of shutting themselves up in Hippo, which was closely besieged by Genseric and his forces. During these fatal ten years from the landing of the Vandals in Africa, the Bishop of Hippo stood firm by his people, and was incessant in his labours, exhorting and consoling them, and, to the extent of his ability, supplying their wants. His righteous soul was agonized from day to day on beholding the misery of his people, and by the arrival of one messenger after another, reporting the progress and the cruelty of the enemy. “One day,” says Possidius, his historian, “while he was sitting at table, conversing familiarly with some friends, Do you know, said he, that I entreated God respecting this calamity, that He would condescend to deliver the city ; or that,

if this was not agreeable to his will, that He would fortify his people for bearing what otherwise seemed good to Him, *and remove myself to another state.*" This wish of his faithful servant God was pleased to grant in the third month of the siege—on the 28th August, A.D. 430. He lived seventy-six years, forty of which he had been a presbyter, or bishop. He used to say that a Christian should never cease to repent, even to the hour of his death. He had David's penitential Psalms inscribed on the wall, in his last sickness, and he read and wept abundantly; and, for ten days before he expired, he desired to be uninterrupted, that he might give himself wholly to devotion, except at intervals. He had preached the Word of God constantly, to his last sickness. He left no will: he had neither money nor lands to leave. He left his library to the Church. When the Vandals, in the following year, took the city, they respected his library and his body. It is said that his remains were carried to Sardinia by the Catholic bishops, who were driven out of Africa by the Barbarians, and subsequently, in the eighth century, were removed to Pavia, and deposited in the church of St. Peter.

It was during the life of this eminent man, and principally by means of his preaching and writings, it pleased God to visit the Church with "times of refreshing"; thus comforting the faithful in the day of trial, and preparing the Church for those "times of

trouble" near at hand. There was a blessed revival, especially in that branch of the Western Church over which Augustine exercised most influence, of those essential doctrines of grace which, in every age, have been the life and nourishment of true godliness. Though the Churches of Africa were laid waste, and the faithful pastors were scattered, the light thus enkindled and widely diffused could not be extinguished. It is the distinguishing honour of Augustine that he was the instrument employed by God, at a time of great decay of vital religion, to revive it in the Church. "For a thousand years and upwards," as Milner remarks, "the light of Divine grace which shone here and there in individuals during the dreary night of superstition, was nourished by his writings, which, next to the sacred Scriptures, were the guides of men who feared God; nor have we in all history an instance of so extensive utility derived to the Church from the writings of man." In how many a monastery in the dark ages, where the Word of God was concealed or but little known or read, have the writings of Augustine been the only guide to truth and peace! We know how useful they proved to Luther and most of the early Protestant Reformers; and, up to this day, his views of the doctrines of the Gospel are embodied in the creeds and confessions of most of the Reformed Churches. Have we not reason to ascribe all the glory to God, who thus prepares instruments for his own service when most needed by the Church, and often

does this in a way, and upon principles, inscrutable to man? *

* "The greater and more important part of St. Augustine's works are preserved. The number of editions of separate treatises is very great, and many of them date from the earliest years of the art of printing. The last edition of his collective works was that of the Benedictines, in eleven volumes folio, published in 1679 and the following years. A reimpression, with some additions by Le Clerc, appeared at Antwerp in 1700—3, in twelve volumes folio. The Benedictine edition has been again revised and reprinted recently in a more convenient form (Paris, 1836—1838), in eleven volumes, published in twenty-two half-volumes."—*Rose*.

CHAPTER XI.

TIMES OF REFRESHING IN THE MEDIEVAL AND DARK AGES—THE WALDENSES.

WE now approach that period in the history of the Church, extending from the sixth century to the time of the glorious Reformation in the sixteenth century. This long and mournful period, which we truly designate as the "*dark ages*," was ushered in by growing superstition in the Church, and by advancing and momentous changes in the Roman empire. The Gospel net had been widely cast, and, as the Saviour had foretold, had "gathered of every kind, both bad and good."* The Church, freed from persecution, enjoying the sunshine of imperial and worldly favour, gradually sunk into a state of superstition, worldliness, and formalism. The rapid and easy transition of multitudes from Paganism to Christianity, the substitution of a nominal and showy form of Christian profession in the place of vital and simple godliness, prepared the way for that awful corruption of the Gospel and apostasy from the faith, which soon fully developed itself in the *Papacy*—that "*Man of Sin*" foretold by St. Paul.† The "*let*," or

* Matt. xiii. 47, 48.

† 2 Thess. ii. 3.

hindrance, to the manifestation of this *Antichristian Power*, to which the Apostle had adverted, was about to be "taken away." The Empire of the Roman Cæsars was fast breaking up, and its "dominion and greatness" were passing into other hands. The enervated legions of the once mighty Rome proved too feeble effectually to resist the countless hordes of the barbarian Goths and Vandals now breaking in upon the empire. "At this crisis, very different was the conduct of various professors of Christianity and ministers of the Gospel. Some of the latter, disgusted by the general depravity, desirous of flying from the contagion of evil, or alarmed for their general safety, had deserted their parochial charges, and betaken themselves to the monasteries. Others had become negligent and careless, and were absorbed in the common vortex of iniquity. Many of the laics, who were religiously disposed, but who had no spiritual guidance to keep them in the right way, separated themselves from their domestic and social ties, put away their wives, abandoned their children, and professing a new kind of abstinence, occasioned great scandal to the name of Christianity. Abandonment of some sort seemed to be the universal infatuation. The licentious, and they who cared nothing about religion, were given over to work all uncleanness with greediness. The pious were not satisfied with the precepts of the Law and the Gospel, but tried to find out for themselves a more perfect way, and sought new means of propitiat-

ing the Divine wrath, of gaining for themselves supernatural protectors, and of appeasing a God, who, as they were taught to believe, was not satisfied with the sacrifice of his only-begotten Son.”* The same writer, speaking of the earlier portion of the period now under review, adds:—“One abuse had followed another in rapid and appalling succession. First came the undue veneration of the memory of holy men, then commemorations in their honour, which savoured of religious services, such as ought to be observed to glorify the Supreme only. Next, the bones and ashes of the pious dead were pronounced to be objects worthy of religious reverence, and for those search was made, and imposture after imposture accompanied their exhumation and exposure to the public eye. The translation of relics from place to place, the divulsion of them, and the deposit of them entire or by morsels, under altars and in churches, led to solemn processions and pilgrimages, and to all manner of extravagant display. They were wrapt in fine linen, and placed in caskets of gold and silver, enriched with precious stones, and the spots where they were enshrined were approached with the utmost awe. Observances, such as the heathen were wont to love, and which certainly were imposing and captivating, found acceptance with the clergy, because they attracted the people. Lights, incense, garlands, tapestry, and music, with all that pomp and pageantry could do to swell the number of reverential and admir-

* Dr. Gilly's "Vigilantius," pp. 367, 368.

ing votaries, were exhibited at these shrines where relics were deposited. Intoxicated with the splendour of the rites by day, and awe-struck by the solemnities that continued through the night, when vigils were kept from sunset to sunrise, individuals were found who fancied they heard sounds and saw sights of preternatural wonder. Some thought that they were admonished or encouraged, or sent on extraordinary missions, by the spirit of the departed saint; others imagined they were suddenly cured of distempers; and miracles were forthwith said to be wrought at these consecrated places."* It is no wonder, amidst this thickening gloom of growing superstition, that the Church, forsaking her duty of upholding the standard of pure truth, lost the reviving and transforming power, and rapidly sunk into a fearful state of spiritual decay and apostasy. Still less can we wonder, that as the consequence and punishment of the Church's unfaithfulness, the Almighty permitted the rise and power of the *Papacy*, the Antichrist of the West, and of *Mohammedanism*, the Antichrist of the East; these great antichristian powers arose about the same time to desolate and lay waste "the heritage of the Lord," and have remained up to the present time the two great antagonistic impediments to the spread of the Gospel.

It is pleasing, however, to remark, that God, who had promised never to forsake his *true* Church, and

* "Vigilantius," pp. 442—444.

that "the gates of hell should not prevail against her," during this long period of darkness and superstition, left not Himself without witnesses of the power of vital godliness and true Christianity. There was "a little flock"—a *witnessing* Church, though "prophesying in sackcloth," which upheld the standard of his pure truth. These were God's "hidden ones," to whom He vouchsafed "times of refreshing," whom He blessed, and made blessings to others. The historian of the Reformation records a touching anecdote illustrative of this :—"In the year 1776, an old building was pulled down, which had formed part of the ancient Carthusian convent at Basle. In a hole in the wall was found secreted a box, in which a poor brother of the Order had deposited some writings. In one of these appeared the following confession :—

"O most merciful God, I know that I can only be saved, and satisfy thy righteousness, by the merit, the innocent suffering and death of thy well-beloved Son. Holy Jesus! my salvation is in thy hands. Thou canst not withdraw the hands of thy love from me, for they have created and redeemed me. Thou hast inscribed my name with a pen of iron, in rich mercy, and so as nothing can efface it, on thy side, thy hands, and thy feet."

Many such instances of true piety occur to us, as we carry our review along the stream of the dark ages, which we cannot stay to notice. Such, and numerous other facts, prove that God had a witnessing Church in

these times of darkness. The symbolic prophecies of the Apocalypse of the *Two Witnesses* "prophesying in sackcloth," have by most interpreters been regarded as referring to this.* It is not necessary to restrict the application of this symbolic representation, as some do, to *two* particular sections of the witnessing Church, in the dark ages, as the *Albigenses* and *Waldenses*, or with others to the *Paulicians* and *Waldenses*; the probability is, that as the Law required the testimony of at least two witnesses to establish the truth of any matter,† the representation is intended to intimate, that during the period adverted to, though the number would be small, yet there would be a sufficient number to witness for God and his pure truth against the prevailing darkness and ignorance of the times in which they lived, to keep alive the lamp of truth, and to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," and to hand it down to the generations which followed them. We see this both in the Eastern and Western branches of the Church. In the Eastern we find the *Paulicians*—so called, as is most probable, from their holding forth prominently those distinguishing doctrines of the Gospel, which we denominate *Pauline*, as more fully set forth in the writings of St. Paul. Those faithful witnesses of the truth spread over the East, and for centuries amidst great persecutions, yet with great success, witnessed against the errors and corrup-

* Rev. xi. 3—12; xii. 6.

† Deut. xvii. 6; Matt. xviii. 6; 1 Tim. v. 19.

tions of a degenerate Church, and in their migrations and dispersions carried the light of the Gospel into other lands, especially into the south of France, where their faithful labours appear to have given rise to the *Albigenses*, especially in union with the primitive Church of the Waldenses, entitled to be regarded as God's faithful witness in the Western branch of the Church. The Apocalyptic description of these "two witnesses" represents the depressed and persecuted state of the true Church during the long reign of Antichrist, and its future triumphs, when "times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." We shall illustrate this view of the subject in reference to the *Waldensian Church*, which, on the ground of its great antiquity, its marvellous preservation, the duration of its faithful testimony, its sufferings, its usefulness, its present and future circumstances, is entitled to be considered as pre-eminently God's chosen and faithful witness of the truth of the Gospel, and as *the Mother Church of the Reformed Churches of the Reformation*.

With regard to the question of the great antiquity of the Church of the Waldenses, it will be sufficient here to adduce the testimony of the late excellent Dr. Gilly, in a work the more to be valued as it is his last publication in the service of this primitive Church, for so many years the object of his affections and benevolent labours:—"Whether the Protestant inhabitants of the valleys on each side of the Alps, between the great

mountain ranges of Mont Cenis and Mont Viso, can be proved by documentary evidence to derive their Christianity from primitive times or not, this is certain, that from very remote periods there has been a *Christianity* in this region, differing from that of Rome in the dark, mediæval, and modern ages; and this has been handed down to the present era by a succession of martyrs, and confessors, and of other faithful men. The faith and discipline of these Alpine Christians may at times have been more or less true to the Gospel rule, but their creed and Church government have always contained articles opposed to the pretensions and errors of Rome, as far as we can judge from documents that can be traced up to the *fourth century*, at least. If, therefore, we find truth and Evangelical holiness among the Waldenses of Piedmont, when the professors of the Gospel in different ages and places went wrong—in the fourth century, for example, and again in the ninth and the eleventh, in the twelfth and the thirteenth, and in the sixteenth century,—if we take epochs at random, and still find vestiges of the pure Gospel at the foot of the Cottian Alps long before the Reformation, we may conclude that the Gospel was transmitted and preserved among them from primitive times. It is surely more probable that “the Men of the Valleys,” shepherds and husbandmen, should *retain* the truth as it was first delivered to them, than that they should be able to *discover* it amidst the darkness of the twelfth century, when all Christendom was departing farther

and farther from the light, under the false teaching of the subtle schoolmen and ambitious and licentious hierarchs. Now, if they did *retain* the truth, through ages of ignorance and superstition, and against violence and persecution, we can attribute it to the grace of God only, and to his special protection."

"Their *secluded dwelling-place** leads us to believe that God has held this people in reserve for some great object: 'they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels.'† The Protestant valleys of Piedmont are *seclusions*, which may be called the strong places of nature, adapted to purposes of retreat and concealment, of defence and security. Here are barriers of ice and rock, glaciers and pinnacles, which are too repulsive for occupation to any but for those who are compelled to fly hither for their very lives. At the same time they are near spots of great fertility, and are in the vicinity of defiles and high-roads, which were traversed in early times by passengers from the capitals of Italy to those of France. From Rome and Milan the traveller might take the route of the celebrated pass which led through the Cottian Alps to the banks of the Rhone; and by this route the primitive messengers of the Gospel *did travel* on their way to and from the cities of Cis-alpine to Trans-alpine Gaul. By God's grace the Sub-alpine ancestors of our modern Vaudois may have heard Christ preached by St. Paul himself on his way

* Rev. xii. 6.

† Mal. iii. 17.

to Spain, or by a convert of apostolic men before the second century. This is a pleasing thought which we may rationally indulge; or we may more confidently say, that the seed sown by Irenæus, or by his proselytes in the Narbonnese, as they journeyed from east to west, was scattered far and wide, until it fell on the banks of the Pelice and the Clusone. At all events we know *historically*, that there were Christians of the Theban Legion who fled from persecution to the foot of Monte Viso, and to the sources of the Po, and that some Vaudois villages, San *Secundo* and *Crisolo*, still retain the names of martyrs, which they bore at the end of the third century. At such a remote period did our Piedmontese valleys exhibit the stamp of early evangelization.

“We will take our next stand on the annals of the fourth century, and there we discover a mark of the Divine favour set on the Sub-alpines of this region. They were permitted to afford a place of refuge to Vigilantius about the year 397. This is recorded by a contemporary ecclesiastical writer, Jerome, who distinctly relates that Vigilantius, after declaiming against image worship, saint worship, relic worship, and other Romish practices, found sympathy and protection in a region between the Cottian Alps and the Adriatic Sea. A great authority (Tilmont) states this region to have been ‘among the snows of the Cottian Alps, which separate Italy from Dauphiné and Provence;’ the very portion of the valleys of S. Martino, Perosa, and

Lucerna. It is an extraordinary fact, in the events ordained by a gracious Providence, that the locality which shelters Christians protesting against Romish adversaries in the fourth century, should have been still sheltering a people of God in the ninth century, according to the testimony of ecclesiastical historians. It is still more remarkable, that a Bishop of Turin, *Claude*, should have been moved by God's Holy Spirit to fan what were called the embers of the 'heresy of Vigilantius,' in the same locality, and to encourage the Sub-alpines of his diocese in their opposition to unscriptural superstitions by his treatise against the worship of the wood of the cross, the adoration of saints, and the use of images, condemning them as absurd and idolatrous. Three hundred years elapsed, and in the twelfth century we find evidence, in a mass of documents, that God continued to bless the valleys at the eastern foot of the Cottian Alps by making them the sacred depository of Gospel truth; and from that time the Waldenses emerged into broader daylight. They are described by hostile writers of the twelfth century as heretics, who were denouncing Popes and Cardinals, who were translating and circulating copies of holy Scripture, and journeying from one country to another, for the purpose of teaching evangelical doctrines, at variance with the scholastic and ecclesiastical tenets of the dominant Church. From that period to the present, the chroniclers of emperors and princes, and the annalists of the Roman hierarchy, have afforded

abundant proof in their pages that the little lamp of the Cottian Alps has never been extinguished, but, under Providence, has been preserved in the same region until it has shone forth brightly, and more brightly unto a perfect day.”*

The Waldensian Church has, from its beginning up to the present time, maintained the character of a faithful witness for the truth of the Gospel against the errors and corruptions of the Church of Rome. In the dark ages, while the rest of Christendom submitted to the tyranny and corruptions of Rome, this little primitive Church, in the seclusion of the Cottian Alps, held fast, and held forth for the enlightenment of others “the faith once delivered to the saints,” and boldly suffered long-continued, unparalleled persecutions for it, rather than deny it. As was to be expected, Rome could not endure the existence of such a Church, or its faithful testimony against her anti-scriptural usurpations and apostacy from the primitive faith; and, therefore, for many centuries, by subtlety and cruelty,—by stirring up their native princes and the power of France,—employed all means to uproot and destroy this humble Church of the Valleys. Armies invaded and laid waste these beautiful valleys,—massacred thousands of the inhabitants,—destroyed their churches,—scattered and exiled the worshippers from the homes and the sepulchres of their fathers. For a

* Dr. Gilly’s valuable Introduction to Miss Willyams’ “History of the Waldensian Church.”

more particular account of their sufferings, of the fidelity and heroism of their many Christian martyrs, and of the wonderful deliverances God wrought for them, we can only here refer to the pages of those who have recorded them.* It would not be possible, with the reminiscence of all this, to express the deeply-interested feelings with which on two occasions we visited these beautiful valley and mountain parishes, rendered sacred by the sufferings and blood of these faithful witnesses and martyrs for the truth of the Gospel. How wonderful the preservation of this Church and people! Like the Bush, seen by the Jewish Prophet at Horeb, though for centuries enveloped in the fires of persecution, it was unconsumed,—for God was in the Bush! What a comment does the history of the Vaudois Church furnish on the symbolic representation of the Apocalypse:—"And the woman (the true Church) fled into the wilderness, *where she hath a place prepared of God*, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and three score days."† In the seasons of trial and cruel persecutions, endured by these faithful witnesses of the truth, special mercy and favour was vouchsafed to them of God. How precious to them was the Word of God. How mercifully were they cheered and sustained by "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord."

* See Leger, Monastier, Dr. Gilly, and Miss Wilyams' History.

† Rev. xii. 6.

“As the sufferings of Christ abounded in them, so their consolation also abounded by Christ.” *

There is manifestly a special providential design of God in this marvellous preservation and isolation of this little Church of the Valleys, through many centuries of unparalleled persecution, up to the present time. This, in many respects, presents a parallel not less remarkable than that of the Jews; the one, as indicating the righteous “*severity*” of God for the punishment of unbelief; the other, the Divine “*goodness*” in honouring the faith of his people; and in both cases clearly indicating high destinies and great purposes hereafter to be accomplished in and by both people. “I am inclined,” says Dr. Gilly, “to regard the *seclusion* of the Waldenses, at the beginning of the Protestant Reformation, as another proof of providential interposition. Had there been a fusion of the Waldenses of Piedmont with the French, Swiss, or German Churches, when Luther, Calvin, and Zuingli were framing articles of faith and discipline, there would have been an end of individuality, and the *prestige* of primitive antiquity, which renders their name and testimony so precious to those who discern in them the veritable representative of a long line of witnesses to the truth as it is in Jesus.” “The continuance of the seclusion of the Waldenses, until it was time for them to come forth from the place in which Providence had hidden them, as it were for their security, is a

* 2 Cor. i. 5.

striking proof that they were reserved for some great purpose. During many ages they were witnesses in sackcloth, in their lowliness, and feebleness, and sufferings, because ‘God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and base things of the world, and the things that are despised, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence.’ This peculiarity in their locality and seclusion, isolating and separating the Waldensian Church from the rest of the professing Church, was one means ordained of God of preserving among them the purity of Christian faith, and of their preservation from those errors and corruptions which were overrunning the rest of Christendom. In all this, we cannot fail to mark the special design of God to separate and preserve the humble Church of the Valleys as the depository of the pure truth of the Gospel, as a living witness against the idolatry and corruptions of the Church of Rome, and as a chosen instrument for the spread of the Gospel in the dark ages and in the latter days. Placed as they were, as has already been remarked, on or near one of the chief roads of communication between Italy and Gaul and the rest of Europe, the Waldensian missionaries were the honoured means of spreading the light and influence of Christianity thus widely. There is reason for believing, that from this humble and faithful Church, from

the beginning *missionary* in character, the light of the Gospel was received in Poland, Bohemia, Gaul, in many parts of the German States, and in our own country. Wycliffe, justly called 'the Morning Star of the Reformation,' Jerome and Huss, the Bohemian confessors and martyrs, and others, there is good reason for affirming, received the light of the Gospel which they so widely spread among their countrymen, from the persecuted and scattered members and missionaries of the Church of the Valleys. Such facts entitle the Waldensian Church to the high honour of being regarded as *the cradle of the Reformation; the Mother Church of all the Reformed and Protestant Churches of the Reformation.*"

"Remember," said the venerable Peyrani, the Moderator of the Vaudois Church, to Dr. Gilly on his first visit to the Valleys, "remember that you are indebted to us for your emancipation from Papal thralldom. We led the way. We stood in the front rank, and against us the first thunderbolts of Rome were fulminated. The baying of the blood-hounds of the Inquisition was heard in our valleys before you knew its name. They hunted down some of our ancestors, and pursued others from glen to glen, and over rock and mountain, till they obliged them to take refuge in foreign countries. A few of these wanderers penetrated as far as Provence and Languedoc, and from them were derived the Albigenes, or the (so-called) heretics of Albi. The province of Guienne afforded shelter to the persecuted

Albigenses. Guienne was then in your possession. From an English province (Guienne) our doctrines found their way into England itself, and your Wycliffe preached nothing more than what had been advanced by the ministers of our Valleys 400 years before his time."

CHAPTER XII.

TIMES OF REFRESHING TO THE WALDENSIAN CHURCH.

THE Almighty, who calls his Church faithfully and boldly to confess the truth, and to suffering for it, never fails to impart strength and consolation to "help in time of need." We see this remarkably verified in the history of the Waldensian Church. What St. Paul says of himself and of his fellow-labourers in the Gospel may in truth be adopted as the motto of the humble Church of the Valleys: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus might be made manifest in our body."* There were times when they were brought low by oppression, and their destruction seemed inevitable, but then God proved their "Saviour in the time of trouble."† To some of these seasons we propose now to refer, as "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord."

How often, as the history of this Church testifies,

* 2 Cor. iv. 8, 9.

† Jer. xiv. 8.

were they favoured with these blessed seasons of the refreshing influences of the Holy Spirit, in their gathering together, in times of severe persecution, in their mountain retreats and valley fastnesses ! How many are the spots, yet pointed out, where this scattered flock of Christ assembled stealthily to hear the Word of Life from the lips of their pastors, to seek the bread of their souls at the hazard of their lives, and to enjoy "the communion of saints." These were scenes on which angels looked down with delight ; these are spots sacred still to many a Christian visitor, where, as many a simple record testifies, were enjoyed "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord."

Thus also, when tidings reached the Valleys of the success of their missionary labours—for from the beginning they were a missionary and evangelizing Church—when some of these faithful missionaries, whom they were accustomed to send forth two and two, returned, bearing the glad tidings how God had blessed their labours in making known Christ and his great salvation to those before in darkness,—though, as often happened, the *solitary* missionary only returned, telling that his companion had been left in prison or had gained the martyr-crown, though some natural tears they shed, the humble Church of the Valleys joyed over their absent or lost brother as a suffering hero for Christ, as "counted worthy to suffer for his name's sake." Yet much more on such occasions did they joy that they were honoured as a Church in making

“manifest the savour of the knowledge of Christ in every place,”* in “turning sinners from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.”† Many were these pure and happy seasons of joy and refreshing vouchsafed to them in the times of their greatest depression and persecution.

The same may be said of those times of rest from persecution — few and far between — granted to this suffering Church. Often did this happen to them at times the most unexpected, and was the result of circumstances and events which manifested the special interposition of God bringing to nought the counsels of their enemies, saying in effect, “Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it.”‡ Such seasons of rest from persecution were welcomed as “times of refreshing,” when “they trimmed their lamps,” the better to enlighten others sitting in darkness. Then they sought to recover those driven from the fold by the craft and cruelty of Popish oppressors—to strengthen the weak, to comfort the mourners, to restore their ruined temples, to renew their vows of fidelity to God and each other, to animate each other to increasing godliness, to courage and zeal in maintaining and spreading abroad “the Gospel of the grace of God.” Such seasons were to them “times of refreshing” and the revival of pure religion. We can only notice some of the more prominent of these seasons occurring at

* 2 Cor. ii. 14.

† Acts xxvi. 18.

‡ Isa. lxxv. 8.

critical periods in the history of this remarkable people.

Soon after the commencement of the glorious *Reformation*, tidings reached the Valleys of the mighty movement against the tyranny and corruptions of the Church of Rome, and of the successful efforts for the revival and spread of Gospel truth and light in Germany and Switzerland. "As cold waters to a thirsty soul," so to the men of the Valleys was this "good news from a far country." After long-continued depression and persecution, they felt that they needed counsel and guidance. They despatched some of their brethren to the principal Reformers, soliciting advice and co-operation. In a letter to Ecolampadius, of Basle, they thus expressed their feelings:—

"Having learned that the Almighty has filled you with his Holy Spirit, as appears by your works, we have recourse to you, with the assurance that the Divine Spirit will enlighten us by your counsels, and will instruct us in many things which are hidden from us, by reason of our ignorance and weakness, to the great detriment of the flock of which we are the unworthy directors; and that you also may become acquainted with our position. You must know, that we poor pastors of this little flock have, during more than four hundred years, experienced the most cruel persecutions, but not without signal marks of the favour of Christ, who has often delivered us when we groaned under the weight of tribulation. In this

state of weakness we come to ask your advice and consolation."

This touching appeal led to a visit of some of the leading Reformers of Switzerland to the Church of the Valleys, and to the meeting of a Synod at *Champforans*, on the 12th of September, 1532. At this Synod met together deputies from the Vaudois Church, pastors from the Protestant Churches of Switzerland, brethren from Bohemia, and several of the Reformers. This interesting Synod lasted six days, and proved a great encouragement and refreshment to the Church of the Valleys. At its close a short Confession of Faith was drawn up, which their historian calls, "A supplement to the ancient Confession of Faith of the year 1120," and which, he affirms, *does not in any way contradict it*.

The testimonies of their historians go to show that this interesting meeting was of great use and refreshing to the Church of the Valleys, to the strengthening of their faith and the revival of the work of God among them. A late writer remarks :—"The counsels of the Reformers to their brethren of the Valleys were worthy of their own renown and the cause to which they were pledged. Truth—simple-minded, single-eyed truth—was the basis of all their expectations, and the resolutions entered into at the Synod of Champforans proved how earnestly the Vaudois prepared to carry into effect the advice given to them. It was here determined that they should lay aside every dissimulation or reserve, every cowardly concealment by which they had hoped

to screen themselves from their enemies,—that they should, on no pretext or compulsion whatever, take part in any Romish ceremony or countenance any Popish superstition—never acknowledge as pastor any priest of the Romish Church, or have recourse to his ministrations. They even took the courageous resolution no longer to carry on their social worship, as they had hitherto conceived it prudent to do, in secresy, but to celebrate it with that publicity and openness, neither shunning nor courting notice, which they considered as most conducive to the glory of God.” Another of their historians, in speaking of this time as one of great refreshing to the Vaudois, tells us, that “a clearer view of their duty strengthened those of the feeblest faith; zeal, which had been languishing for years, revived anew in every heart. A Christian life, not entirely new, but renovated, circulated through all the branches of the Vaudois Churches. Barbes * and private Christians supported each other in realizing the one desire—that of glorifying their Saviour in the face of idolaters. Their ardent wish was to reproduce in action the device still engraved on the seal of the Vaudois Church, ‘*a light shining in darkness.*’”

One noble result of the Synod of Champforans was a resolution to translate the Holy Scriptures into the French language. The poor Vaudois took upon themselves the expense of this great work and of the publication of the first edition. A folio edition of this trans-

* Their *Pastors* were so called.

lation was published at Neufchatel in the 5th June, 1585, under the following title: "La Bible, qui est toute la Sainte Ecriture." The translation was made by *Olivet*, a kinsman of Calvin. The liberality of the humble Church of the Valleys, in thus, in the depth of their poverty, expending 1,500 gold crowns, in giving to their brethren the Word of Life, is gratefully acknowledged in the following lines placed at the beginning of the Bible:—

" Les Vaudois, peuples évangéliques,
Ont mis ce trésor en publique."

This season of respite from persecution did not long continue. The *Inquisition* set up in Turin, in 1637, proved of disastrous consequence to the Church of the Valleys. Popish armies again invaded and laid waste by fire and sword this "heritage of the Lord." Leger, their historian, describing the horrors of this fresh persecution, tells us, that "young children were torn from their mothers' arms, dashed against the rocks, and their mangled remains cast out upon the road. Sick persons and old people were burned alive in their houses, or hacked in pieces, or mutilated in horrible ways." The news of the horrible sufferings and massacres inflicted on this peaceful people awakened a thrill of indignation and sympathy throughout Protestant Europe. Large sums were raised, especially in England and Holland, for their relief, and ambassadors were sent to the Court of Turin to protest against, and to implore and demand the cessation of such anti-

Christian and cruel persecution. It is gratifying to know that England took the lead, under the Protectorate of Cromwell, in thus helping and shielding the Vaudois from the exterminating malice of their enemies. On this occasion Milton penned his noble sonnet:—

“Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
Lie scattered in the Alpine mountains cold;
E'en them who kept thy faith so pure of old,
When all our fathers worshipped stocks and stones,
Forget not; in thy book record their groans,
Slain by the bloody Piedmontese, that rolled
Mother and infant down the rocks. Their moans
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they
To heaven. Their martyred blood and ashes sow
On all the Italian plains, where still doth sway
The triple tyrant; that from these may grow
A hundred-fold, who, having learnt thy way,
Early may fly the Babylonian woe.”

The powerful intercession of England and other Protestant States obtained for the suffering Vaudois a partial recognition of their rights, and a season of respite from persecution: but this truce proved treacherous, and the violence of persecution soon again begun. In the year 1635 the proud Louis of France repealed the Edict of Nantes, and banished hundreds of thousands of his Protestant subjects from his kingdom; and required the Duke of Savoy to do the same. Victor Amadeus III., the reigning Duke, published an Edict, forbidding, on pain of death and the confiscation of

property, the celebration of religious worship, both public and private, except by Roman Catholics; ordered the destruction of the Vaudois temples, the banishment of their pastors and schoolmasters, and commanded all their children to be educated in the Romish faith. To enforce this cruel edict a combined French and Piedmontese army was sent into the Valleys, to which, for a time, by deeds of heroism, the men of the Valleys offered successful resistance, till at length, beguiled by the false promises of the Piedmontese General, they laid down their arms and submitted themselves to the mercy of their Prince. Alas! they trusted only to be deceived. Their women were delivered over to the violence of a brutal soldiery; the children were torn from their parents and dispersed among the Papists; several of their pastors were put to death; and thousands of the Vaudois, reckoned from 12,000 to 14,000, were cast into dungeons, where, in a short time, from 3,000 to 4,000 are said to have fallen victims to disease and starvation. The united voice of Protestant Europe pleaded for them in vain. The only alternative conceded to the suffering Vaudois was,—*submission to the Romish faith, or banishment!* They nobly chose exile from their loved valleys rather than renounce the pure faith of the Gospel, for which they had for so many centuries been faithful witnesses, and which was dearer to them than all other blessings. It is said that only 2,600 out of 15,000, who had constituted the population of the Valleys, remained to take advantage

of this offer of exile. The edict of banishment with cruel haste was enforced. In the depth of a severe winter this feeble band of suffering witnesses for Christ, with bleeding hearts, bade adieu to their loved Valleys, taking with them their aged, their sick, their wives and children, to cross the inclement Alps ! Hundreds perished by the way. Eighty-six are said to have perished in the snow storms they encountered in crossing Mont Cenis. That God, for whom they nobly suffered the loss of all things, had prepared Christian hearts in Switzerland to give them a welcome and a home. We prefer giving an account of their reception there in the words of another :—"As the exiled bands one after another crawled into the bright city (Geneva) of the lake of lakes, they found Christian brethren on the watch to receive and convey them to their homes ; nay, even contending who should have the care of the most feeble and diseased, whom they bore on their shoulders to the couch and table spread for them beneath their hospitable roofs. Here private benevolence fed, clothed, and nursed them, until more organized measures were arranged by the Evangelical Cantons for their future settlement. But their benefactors did not defer their ministrations until the arrival of the sufferers. On learning from the first party their hardships by the way, the magistrates of Berne dispatched deputies, who, with the permission of the Piedmontese Government, took their stations along the road the exiles were to travel, and providing them at every stage

with clothes, food, and medicine, and the reviving cordial of sympathy and consolation." Though prominence is here given to Switzerland in thus showing sympathy and compassion to the sufferers, she was not alone in this. Other Protestant States shared in this work of Christian love. The Elector of Brandenburg, and other Princes of Germany and Holland and England, were not behind in showing kindness to the persecuted Vaudois. Thus, in the times of great tribulation, God vouchsafed to his suffering Church "times of refreshing." How refreshing to these exiles, crossing the Alpine heights amidst snows and ice, and traversing their mountain defiles, the meeting of Christian brethren, bearing to them supplies for their necessities, and words of welcome and comfort to cheer their hearts! The effect could not have been other than that which the meeting of the Christian brethren from Rome produced on the mind of the prisoner Paul, "whom, when we saw, we thanked God and took courage."* What blessed "times of refreshing" were these to the exiled Church at Geneva and other places, where communion with their fellow-Christians, and the freedom of religious worship, denied to them in their native valleys, were so fully enjoyed! How refreshing to them this fulness of Christian love and sympathy of every Protestant State when thus suffering "for the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ!"

As it was with the captive and exiled Jews in Baby-

* Acts xxviii. 15.

lon, who wept when they remembered Jerusalem and the mountains and valleys of that fair land, and sighed to return thither ; so was it with the exiled Waldenses. When they looked over the bright Lake of Lemman, and caught the distant view of the glorious mountains of their fatherland, could they do other than feel what has been rightly described as that "strange home sickness to which the inhabitants of mountainous countries are especially subject ?" They sighed for their much-loved mountains and valleys—scenes rendered dearer to them by their sufferings, by the blood of their martyrs, by the temples of their God and their fathers' sepulchres. The desire, the resolve, to return thither was irresistible. In two attempts they made to return they were frustrated by the friendly Swiss, who, fearful of the vengeance of their enemies, detained them among them by force, and dispersed them more widely among the German States, in Wurtemberg and in the Palatinate. "Whilst," as one observes, "the exiled Vaudois were making the impossible attempt to reconcile themselves to these new lands the mystic hand of Providence was writing on the walls of Paris the fall of the blood-stained despot, Louis XIV., from the height of his pride, and pointing some of his victims to the recovery of their homes and liberties. *William* of Orange, the head of the Protestant League against France and Rome, was visited at the Hague by a kindred spirit, *Henri Arnaud*, the pastor and leader of the Vaudois, who asked his advice as to the future

proceedings of his little band. William was certain to counsel, and Arnaud was certain to follow, the bold course. It was, that the Vaudois should regain by force the valleys which had been consecrated by the blood of their fathers to a pure faith; and for this attempt William supplied considerable funds. Just at that period, the entrance of the French armies into the Palatinate compelled the Vaudois to retrace their steps to Switzerland; and, shortly after, the elevation of William of Orange to the throne of England stimulated them to resolve on reconquering their Alpine homes."

At length the desired hour of attempting this marvellous enterprise, than which history records nothing equal in boldness and peril, arrived. On the night of the 16th of August, 1689, a band of 800 or 900 of the exiled Vaudois, leaving their wives and children behind them to the care of the hospitable Swiss, crossed in silence the lovely lake of Geneva to reconquer their native valleys. Henri Arnaud, a man singularly uniting in himself the piety of a pastor and the military prowess and skill of a hero, was their leader. They commenced this perilous enterprise with prayer; they went onward in faith, overcoming every obstacle opposed to their advance. "They traversed the valleys of the Arve and of Montjoie, crossed the Col-de-Bonhomme, and the Mont Cenis, and descended into Italy by the gorge of the Saillon, near Susa. They sustained a check from the garrison of the fort of Exilles; but, when surrounded by French troops near the bridge of

Salaberteau, they rushed upon a force of 2,500 men under the Marquis de Larrey, carried the bridge and the fort, routed the enemy with great slaughter, and, having themselves lost only twenty-four killed and wounded, they entered the Vaudois valleys of Prageles and St. Martin. At every stage of this extraordinary journey they sought the Divine protection, or offered thanksgiving for success, in public prayer, conducted by their pious leader. In eleven days they had traversed Savoy and the Alps, from the Lake of Geneva to the mountain fastness of the *Balsille*, at the head of the Valley of St. Martin. On the sixteenth day after passing the intervening hills, and having beaten several detachments of the enemy, they established themselves at *Bobio* and *Sibaud*, in the Valley of Lucerne.*

The first Sunday after the return of this little band to their native valleys, encompassed by cruel enemies, was passed at Bobio. They assembled in the meadow of *Sibaud*, a little above that village, on a rising ground, to return thanks for deliverance, and to pledge themselves to renewed fidelity to God and each other." "God," said they, "by his Divine grace, having happily led us back into the heritage of our forefathers, there to re-establish the pure service of our holy religion, by the completion of the enterprise which the great God of armies has hitherto conducted in our favour: We, the pastors, captains, and other officers,

* See an interesting sketch of a "Visit to the Vaudois," by Edward Baines.

swear before God, and at the peril of our souls, to observe union and order among us ; never willingly to separate and disunite while God shall grant life to us, not even though we should be so miserable as to be reduced to three or four ; never to parley or treat with our enemies, as well of France as Piedmont, without the participation of our whole council of war." This Oath of Sibaud thus concludes :—"Promising, moreover, to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to rescue, as far as may in us lie, our brethren from the power of the cruel Babylon, and, with them, to re-establish and maintain his kingdom unto death ; and by this oath we will abide all our lives."

Severe were the conflicts which, for several weeks after, this little band of Christian heroes had to sustain, and very marvellous were the deliverances God wrought for them, especially at the *Balsille*—a natural fortress of great strength, where they long defended themselves against powerful armies sent to destroy them. In the hour of their greatest peril, when every refuge seemed to fail them, the providence of God, in a singular manner, interposed for their rescue. At this critical time, their Prince, the Duke of Savoy, abandoned his alliance with France, took his faithful and long-persecuted Vaudois into his protection and service, restored to them their homes, their children, and refugees, and guaranteed to them their liberties.

For this surprising deliverance and happy turn in their affairs, the Waldenses were, under God, indebted

to the powerful influence of *William, King of England*. The historian, Macaulay, thus accounts for it:—"It must not be supposed that William ever forgot that his special, his hereditary mission was to protect the Reformed faith. His influence with Roman Catholic Princes was constantly and strenuously exerted for the benefit of their Protestant subjects. In the spring of 1691, the Waldensian Shepherds, long and cruelly persecuted, and weary of their lives, were surprised by glad tidings. Those who had been in prison for heresy returned to their homes. Children who had been taken from their parents to be educated by priests were sent back. Congregations which had worshipped only by stealth and with extreme peril now worshipped without molestation in the face of day. The simple mountaineers probably never knew that their fate had been a subject of discussion at the Hague, and that they owed the happiness of their firesides, and the security of their humble temples, to the ascendancy which William exercised over the Duke of Savoy." *

This was truly to the long-persecuted Church of the Valleys "a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord." They might and did say, "Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we are escaped. Our help is in the

* The secret article by which the Duke of Savoy bound himself to grant toleration to the Waldenses is in Dumont's Collection. It was signed Feb. 8, 1691.—*Macaulay's "History of England,"* vol. iv., chap. xviii., p. 12.

name of the Lord who made heaven and earth." "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing ; then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them. The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad." *

Though, after this period, the violence of former persecutions was not renewed, and the religious freedom granted to the Vaudois was continued, they were exposed to the unjust suspicions and petty annoyances of their Roman Catholic adversaries. The close of the eighteenth and the commencement of the nineteenth century, however, witnessed a sad declension in the piety and faith of the Church of the Valleys. The outbreak of the French Revolution, the conquests of Napoleon in Italy, by which Piedmont was added to the empire of France, produced mournful changes. French revolutionary, Infidel, Rationalistic principles were widely spread over the land. Several of the pastors, sent to Switzerland and Germany for education, returned to the Valleys, bringing with them the heterodox and rational opinions they had imbibed in Germany and Switzerland. All this prepared the way for a widely-spread declension of vital godliness in the Valleys, and a departure from the simplicity and purity of "the faith once delivered to the saints." It pleased God, however, in mercy to revisit and restore the

* Ps. cxxiv., cxxvi.

declining Church, and by means similar to those by which the great revival of religion was brought about in our own country. That truly apostolic pastor, Felix Neff, crossing the range of Alps which separated the scene of his ministry from the Vaudois, visited the Valleys. His faithful preaching proved a great blessing; it was the means of stirring up many who mourned the declension of their Church, to meet together in various places of the Valleys for prayer and exhortation, to seek the revival of pure religion and faith among them. These faithful men, resembling the Primitive Methodists in our own country, like them, had to endure years of ridicule and persecution as disturbers and schismatics; but they persevered, and proved at length, through God's blessing, the honoured instruments of that revival of vital religion and pure faith, which has continued to manifest itself in growing strength and lustre up to the present time. The particulars of this revival of religion would form an interesting chapter in the history of the Vaudois Church, but we have not access to the documents in which they are recorded. What we have stated is from the testimony of one—a leader—of that little band of revivalists, who has lately deceased at La Tour, and who lived long enough to bless God for these “times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.” *

* We give the following extract from a letter of a friend whom we met at La Tour, in May, 1856 :—“ On Friday evening I arrived in England, and have now the pleasure of enclosing

We hasten to close this sketch by a brief notice of the present revived and promising state of the Vaudois Church. The great political earthquake which passed over the greater part of Europe in 1848, which shook and overturned thrones, and drove princes from their kingdoms, through the overruling providence of God, established the civil and religious freedom of the Vaudois on a firmer basis. In that year *Charles Albert*, the then reigning Sovereign of Sardinia, by the constitutional charter he gave to his people, proclaimed the emancipation of the Waldenses from all civil disabilities, and established their right to full civil and religious

the paper which B—— gave me at La Tour, enumerating the titles, &c., of the books which record the commencement of the good work which, in these last years, has been progressing in the Vaudois Valleys. The possession of these books would give you much more exact and complete information on these interesting subjects than I could communicate by letter. The good old man became very affectionate towards me in our last interview, and presented both his cheeks for me to salute him with a brotherly kiss, according to the custom of that country. I could not but honour the man who, when the Vaudois as well as the Catholics were against him, manfully persevered until God awakened the Vaudois pastors; and then, when he saw they also were really preaching the Gospel, merged his work in theirs. 'This was indeed noble and brotherly. It showed no small measure of the spirit of Christ.' The document enclosed is as follows:—" 'Notice sur Felix Neff;' 'La Magasin Methodista,' 1833; 'Archives du Christianisme,' 1832; 'Archives,' 2d seria, 1833; 'Religieuse da Canton de Vaud,' Lausanne, 1833."

privileges in common with the other subjects of the kingdom. Royal Letters Patent were issued the 25th of February, 1848, granting the Waldenses an equality of civil rights, and free toleration in matters of religion ! This was truly a "time of refreshing," and of great rejoicing to the men of the Valleys. The 17th of February, 1848, when deputations from all parts of Piedmont assembled at Turin, to thank the King for the Charter of freedom he had granted, will ever be memorable in the history of the Vaudois. On this memorable day the Vaudois appeared bearing their flag with a suitable inscription. The Committee of Management for the procession thus addressed the Waldensian deputation :—"Beloved Brethren,—Until now you have been oppressed, until now you have suffered, and been trampled under foot ; you have been the least and last ; to-day in this demonstration you must have the first place." The Waldenses, upholding the banner of their ancient, Apostolic Church, headed that joyful procession to the presence of their liberator King ! "Papal Italy," remarks one, "then beheld a wondrous sight. The persecuted witnessing Church, that had for so many centuries borne the cross in meekness and faith, came forth from the wilderness no longer with her torch inverted, or nearly extinguished in persecution, but holding it up on high as an ensign to the nations. '*Lux lucet in tenebris*' (the motto on the seal of the Vaudois) may now well be the triumphant cry of the Waldensian Christians, as they gird themselves to the

conflict, and come forth as the evangelists of their beloved Italy."

The present state of the Vaudois resembles that of the Christians of Judæa on the cessation of persecution and the conversion of the persecutor:—" *Then had the Churches rest ; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.*" * A delightful revival of true religion, of Christian union, and of zeal for the spread of the Gospel, is manifest among them. The time of rest and freedom is diligently improved by them, in efforts for the circulation of the Scriptures and the evangelization of their Italian countrymen. We see the fruits of this in the new churches and congregations at Turin, Nice, Pinerola, and Genoa. The improvement of their College for the training of their pastors and evangelists, the multiplication of schools, and various other schemes of Christian benevolence, in which they are aided and encouraged by Christians in England, Ireland, Scotland, and America ; all indicate revived vitality in the Church, and warrant the hope that God, who has so marvellously preserved this humble Church of the Valleys, has great and glorious purposes to accomplish by its instrumentality. The call of God to the Vaudois Church now is, " Arise, shine ; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations : spare not, lengthen thy

* Acts ix. 31.

cords, and strengthen thy stakes ; for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left ; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited." *

The duty of the Christian Church in England and America to help the Vaudois Church, is too manifest to require to be enforced. Its marvellous preservation and isolation in Italy for so many centuries, shows clearly that it is the purpose of God to make it the missionary Church of Italy. Her present state of revived energy is but the commencing preparation for the accomplishment of this glorious work. Let not Christians who seek the good of this primitive Church, attempt organic changes in it, or its fusion by such means into other peculiar forms of ecclesiastical polity, let them not attempt to urge her forward by forcing on her new schemes of action, or by independent action on their own part, but rather *to aid to co-operate with and through the agency* of the Vaudois Church, in the great work in which it is engaged. A writer who has lately visited the Valleys justly remarks :—"The Church of the Vaudois is now, we thank God, rising to new and vigorous life, even as the Churches of this land did in the last half century ; and with this cheering fact on the one hand, we can point with unmixed satisfaction on the other, to the efficiency of her constitution, and to the scriptural character of her standards and her worship." "On

* Isaiah lx. 1 ; liv. 2, 3.

the admission of the Vaudois Church being a perfectly well-organized Christian Society, sound in doctrine and practice, let it even be granted that for some reasons it might be expedient, in ordinary times, to assimilate her more closely to some one or other of the Churches of the Reformation, I hold that even if ever such expediency could exist at all, it cannot do so at the present moment. These are not ordinary times. *All* the attention, *all* the zeal, *all* the time, *all* the activity, *all* the energy of the Vaudois Church, is demanded for the help of their struggling country; and shall we divert their attention for a moment from these pressing claims at this crisis in Italy, in Europe, and the world, to little party discussions about forms of government, and ritual service, leading them to spend their strength in empty contests among themselves, on points, which however important in some respects, are in the main indifferent? I cannot conceive any greater triumph of the enemy of truth than if he should succeed in drawing off the attention of the Vaudois Church from the work of evangelization in Italy, and fixing it on a series of organic changes, whatever these might be, in the midst of their own body.”* To these judicious observations, we add the no less important remarks of the late Dr. Gilly:—“It is for this perseverance in the right path that we believe God has blessed them, not only in their own valleys and persons, but in the nation and country to which they belong. The

* The Rev. D. T. K. Drummond.

kingdom of Sardinia is the only one prosperous and constitutional State in Italy where there are national improvements and a prospect of progressive advancement in freedom, commerce, and political importance. May we not say, it is for the sake of the Waldensian Church, that the Sardinian States are enabled, by the Lord of hosts and the King of kings, to take an honourable place among the kingdoms of the world? And from the indications of the past and of the present, may we not also prognosticate the future glorious position of the Waldenses in the Gospel kingdom upon earth? 'As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river side, as the trees which the Lord hath planted.' But even should they not themselves rise higher among the Churches of Christendom, they have borne their testimony, they have performed their part, and they have kept alive a lamp in the wilderness, from which many a golden candlestick may yet set up a stronger, if not a purer light."

CHAPTER XIII.

TIMES OF REFRESHING IN THE DAYS OF WYCLIFFE— THE MORNING STAR OF THE REFORMATION.

THE question has often been boastfully asked by members of the Church of Rome, in reference to the Protestant Church, "Where was your Church before Luther?" insinuating, by such an inquiry, that the true Church of God in England had no existence before, and that it owed its existence to the labours of the German Reformer. Whereas, there is no fact which admits of stronger proof than that of the existence and growth of true Christianity and of an Apostolic and National Church in this country, from the earliest ages up to the time of its corruption and subversion by the Church of Rome. The *Reformation*, as the meaning of the word indicates, was not the *creation*, but the *reforming* of our Church; the *restoration* of the Church to Apostolic purity of faith, from which it had been turned away by the errors and tyranny of Rome. The learned historian, Sharon Turner, truly remarks, "Protestantism is Catholic Christianity, reformed from Papal corruptions. Romanism is sectarianism, compared with Apostolic Christianity." Blackstone, than whom few knew

better the ancient records of the religion and laws of our country, says, "The ancient British Church, by whomsoever planted, was a stranger to the Bishop of Rome and his pretended authority. But the Pagan Saxon invaders, having driven the professors of Christianity to the remotest corners of our island, *their own* conversion was afterwards effected by Augustine, the monk, and other missionaries from the Court of Rome. This necessarily introduced some few of the Papal corruptions in point of faith and doctrine: but we read of no civil authority claimed by the Pope in these kingdoms till the era of the Roman Conquest." The Reformation *pre-existed* in this country before its consummation in the sixteenth century. There were reformers boldly protesting against the tyranny and corruptions of the Church of Rome long before the days of Luther. He had been preceded by a host of pioneers, who had prepared the way for ultimate success. Among these stand nobly pre-eminent the Waldenses; and in our own country, Bede, Elfric, Grosseteste, Bradwardine, Wycliffe, and others. These protested against Romish errors, spread the light of pure truth in dark times, and prepared the way for the glorious Reformation. *Wycliffe*, who is justly called "the Morning Star of the Reformation," though his early labours were mixed with some errors, was, in all respects, greatly in advance of the times in which he lived. He anticipated the Reformation by almost two centuries. "Many of Wycliffe's opinions," as Dean

Waddington remarks, "were too advanced and ripe for the bleak season in which he lived. They were calculated, indeed, for the consideration of all virtuous and disinterested men; and they were sure to *create* in succeeding generations a disposition towards better principles of belief and practice; but they could look for no general reception among those to whom they were first addressed."

We have visited and admired the beauties of the lovely locality of the little retired village of Wycliffe on the banks of the Tees, in the north of Yorkshire, where our Reformer was born in the year 1324. The name of Wycliffe is evidently a local one, being written *John de Wycliffe*. The parish bearing that name, from the time of the Norman Conquest, had been the residence of a family bearing that name, who were lords of the manor of Wycliffe, and patrons of the rectory. A portrait of the Reformer is still preserved in the rectory as an heirloom to the holders of the living. No trace is to be found of Wycliffe's name in the early records of the parish. Tradition says that every record of the kind was early erased, the Church having branded him as an heretic. Of his early years, up to the age of sixteen, we have no certain information. Wycliffe's early religious feelings and opinions are attributed to the Evangelical doctrines propagated by the Waldenses, —some of these faithful witnesses for the truth, probably driven hither by persecution, had made their way to this country. An old writer says :—" Wycliffe

received his first knowledge of the truth from one Friar *Rayner Lollard*, who brought the doctrine of the Waldenses into England, and from whom his disciples were called *Lollards*.”* His religious feelings appear to have been greatly deepened and strengthened during the prevalence of a dreadful pestilence, which, after fearfully devastating Asia, Egypt, Greece, and Italy, appeared in England in 1348. In the space of a few months many thousands in the metropolis fell victims to this fearful visitation. “Wycliffe was now in the twenty-third year of his age. He saw the distemper passing from men to the brute creation, covering the land with putrid flesh; the labours of husbandry suspended, the courts of justice closed; the timid resorting to every device of superstition for security, and perishing around him, sometimes buoyant with delusion, and sometimes frenzied with despair. It was said that a tenth only of the human family had been spared. Even grave men supposed that the earth had lost full half its population. Whether the man of three-and-twenty, who was ere long to become distinguished as a Reformer of religion, believed in one of these rumours or the other, enough, we may be assured, became known to him, on the ground of unquestionable evidence, to place the calamity before him in aspects deeply affecting; and, from his frequent references to it in after life, we learn that the impression made by it on his humane and devout mind was deep and abiding.”

* Clarke's “Lives of the Fathers and Reformers.”

This solemn judgment of God, visiting so widely and fatally the nations of the earth, not only had the effect of producing in Wycliffe deep seriousness of mind, but to have possessed him with most gloomy views of the state of society generally, and of the corruptions of the Church, against both of which he regarded this fearful plague as the manifest token of the Divine wrath. He is said to have passed days and nights in solitude, in prayer to God, to show him the path of duty and peace; and having found what he sought in Holy Scripture his first desire and resolve was to make it known to others.

In the case of Wycliffe, in the early part of the fourteenth century, as in that of Luther nearly 200 years after, the increasing tyranny and exactions of the Papacy had evoked a strong spirit of antagonism to Rome. The resistance of the reigning sovereign, Edward III., and of the Parliament, to the demands of Urban V., the reigning Pontiff, who required of Edward to do homage to him for the crown of England, and to pay as feudal tribute the annual rent of one thousand marks, provoked a spirit of opposition to the Papacy throughout the nation. In this the talents of Wycliffe fitted him to act a leading part. He had greatly distinguished himself at the University as a profound scholar, and an able teacher and preacher. As an able politician, with great knowledge of canon and civil law, and a fervent Christian, "he vigorously defended the rights of the Crown against Romish

aggression ; his arguments not only enlightened his fellow-countrymen generally, but stirred up the zeal of several members of both Houses of Parliament." Being elected Warden of Baliol College in 1361, and Warden of Canterbury College in 1365, he began to propagate zealously Evangelical doctrines, and to condemn the errors of Rome both in faith and practice. The growing influence of the Mendicant Friars, who were not only unpopular as rivals of the regular teachers in the University and of the clergy generally, but hated and feared for their influence in seducing the hopeful young scholars to become Friars, roused him to expose their claims and errors. As was to be expected, he soon experienced opposition and persecution. He went forward in his noble work, and soon his faithful voice was raised, not only against particular abuses in the Church, but against the whole system of Popery. In a work which he published, under the title of *Trialogus*,—a dialogue between Truth, Falsehood, and Wisdom,—he boldly sets forth, that the Popes were not vicars of Christ, but proud vicars of the King of Pride ; that it was want of faith to pray to saints when Christ offers to be our Mediator and intercessor ; that repentance means a change of the disposition of the mind, without which confession, absolution, and submission to penance were useless forms ; and that in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the elements of bread and wine continued, even after consecration, to be bread and wine. The great object of his

teaching now was the restoration of pure scriptural truth, by setting up the Holy Scriptures as the only supreme standard of faith and practice.

As the reward of great services rendered to the Government, in a mission to Flanders to settle the question of some extravagant claims of the Pope (A.D. 1374-1375), on his return to England he was presented to the rectory of *Lutterworth*. Here he preached boldly the truth of God and denounced Popish errors. The rapid spread of his doctrines among all classes filled the Papacy with alarm. He was charged with heresy, and was cited by Courtenay, the son of the Earl of Devonshire, Bishop of London, to appear before Convocation, assembled at St. Paul's Cathedral. In this time of peril (Feb. 19th, 1377) he was rescued from the danger by the powerful protection of the celebrated John of Gaunt, and the Earl Percy, Marshal of the Kingdom. Baffled in this instance in their attempt to crush the heretic and his doctrines, his enemies, in a short time, renewed the attempt with greater determination. In the month of June, 1377, three letters, addressed by the Pope, Gregory XI., to the King, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the University of Oxford, denounced Wycliffe as a heretic, and called upon them to proceed against him. He was cited to appear at Lambeth. On this occasion, also, he was delivered by powerful protection from his danger. "The Archbishop had scarcely opened the sitting when Sir Louis Clifford entered the chapel and forbade the Court, on the part of the Queen

Mother, to proceed against the Reformer. The bishops were struck with panic fear; 'They bent their heads,' says a Roman Catholic historian, 'like a reed before the wind.' Wycliffe retired, after handing in a protest. 'In the first place,' said he, 'I resolve with my whole heart, and by the grace of God, to be a sincere Christian; and, while my life shall last, to profess and defend the law of Christ so far as I have power.' Wycliffe's enemies attacked this protest, and one of them eagerly maintained that whatever the Pope ordered should be looked upon as right. 'What!' answered the reformer, 'the Pope may then exclude from the canon of Scriptures any book that displeases him, and alter the Bible at pleasure?' He thought that Rome, unsettling the grounds of infallibility, had transferred it from the Scriptures to the Pope, and was desirous of restoring it to its true place, and re-establishing authority in the Church on a truly divine foundation."* "A great change," observes the same writer, "was now taking place in the reformer. Busy-ing himself less about the kingdom of England, he occupied himself more about the kingdom of Christ. In him the political phasis was followed by the religious. To carry the glad tidings of the Gospel into the remotest hamlets was now the great idea which possessed Wycliffe. If begging friars (said he) stroll over the country, preaching the legends of Saints and the history of the Trojan war, we must do for God's

* Merle D'Aubigné—"Reformation in England."

glory what they do to fill their wallets, and form a vast itinerant and evangelization to convert souls to Jesus Christ." Turning to the pious of his disciples, he said to them, "*Go and preach*, it is the sublimest work ; but imitate not the priests whom we see after the sermon sitting in the alehouses, or at the gambling-table, or wasting their time in hunting. After your sermon is ended do you visit the sick, the aged, the poor, the blind, and the lame, and succour them according to your ability." Such was the new practical authority which Wycliffe inaugurated—it was that of Christ himself. These "*Poor Priests*,"—for so they were called—thus sent forth by the reformer, went forth in humble guise, and wherever they went, in villages, fields, churchyards, and market places, preached the glad tidings of the Gospel to listening multitudes, very many of whom rejoiced in their labours, became obedient to the faith, and "turned from dumb idols to serve the living God." Notwithstanding the opposition of the Romish priesthood, this evangelization spread wider and wider over the country : and thus, after a long night of spiritual darkness and death, came "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord."

Wycliffe's great work, however, and that by which the Reformation in this country was most promoted, was the translation and circulation of the Holy Scriptures. "Scholasticism," as a writer before quoted remarks, "had banished the Scriptures into a mysterious obscurity. It is true that Bede had translated

the Gospel of St. John; that the learned men at Alfred's Court had translated the four Evangelists; that Elfric, in the reign of Ethelred, had translated some books of the Old Testament; that an Anglo-Norman priest had paraphrased the Gospels and the Acts; that Richard Rolle, "the Hermit of Hampole," and some pious clerks in the fourteenth century, had produced a version of the Psalms, the Gospels, and Epistles;—but these rare volumes were hidden, like theological curiosities, in the libraries of a few convents. It was then a maxim that the reading of the Bible was injurious to the laity; and, accordingly, the priests forbade it, just as the Brahmins forbid the Shasters to the Hindoos. Oral tradition alone preserved among the people the histories of the Holy Scriptures, mingled with legends of the saints. The time appeared ripe for the publication of the Bible. The increase of population, the attention the English were beginning to devote to their own language, the developement which the system of representative government had received, the awakening of the human mind,—all these circumstances favoured the Reformer's design. Wycliffe was ignorant, indeed, of Greek and Hebrew; but was it nothing to shake off the dust which for ages had covered the Latin Bible, and to translate it into English? He was a good Latin scholar, of sound understanding and great penetration; but, above all, he loved the Bible, he understood it, and desired to communicate this treasure to others. Let us imagine him



in his quiet study:—on his table is the Vulgate text, corrected after the best manuscripts; and lying open around him are the commentaries of the Doctors of the Church, especially those of St. Jerome and Nicolas Lyrensis. Between ten and fifteen years he steadily prosecuted this task; learned men aided him with their advice; and one of them, Nicolas Hereford, appears to have translated a few chapters for him. At last, in 1380, it was completed. This was a great event in the religious history of England, which, outstripping the nations on the Continent, took her station in the foremost rank in the great work of disseminating the Scriptures.”

Thus was opened, for the first time in a language understood by the people, the precious treasure of the entire Word of God. The art of printing was then unknown. The labours of copyists, however, soon multiplied copies of the precious book, which was eagerly sought after, read, and circulated. As was to be expected, the translation and circulation of the Scriptures excited the alarm and opposition of the priesthood. Knighton, Archdeacon of Leicester, the bitter opponent of Wycliffe, thus expressed his alarm:—“Christ,” he says, “delivered his Gospel to the clergy and doctors of the Church, that they might administer to the laity and to weaker persons, according to the state of the times and the wants of men. But this Master John Wycliffe translated it out of Latin into English, and thus laid it more open to the laity, and to

women who could read, than it had formerly been to the most learned of the clergy, even to those of them who had the best understanding; *and so the Gospel pearl is cast abroad, and trodden under foot of swine.*"

God raised up defenders of his Word and servant. In 1390, a Motion having been made in the House of Lords to seize all the copies of the Bible, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, exclaimed, "Are we, then, the very dregs of humanity, that we cannot possess the laws of our religion in our own tongue?" At length a constitution of Archbishop Arundel, A.D. 1408, prohibited the perusal, in public or private, of the Scriptures, unless approved by the diocesan or a provincial synod. The possession of a single leaf of Wycliffe's translation rendered its possessor liable to the penalties of heresy. Yet, notwithstanding this, and although the cost of a copy, as appears from the registry of Norwich under A.D. 1429, was four marks and forty pence (2*l.* 16*s.* 8*d.*),—a sum sufficient for the yearly maintenance of a labourer at that time,—the number of copies yet extant show that neither the cost of obtaining, nor the peril of possessing, could repress the eagerness and determination of our countrymen to obtain for themselves the Word of God. To multitudes of our countrymen might be applied the words of the prophet:—"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." This was

truly a "time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord."

A more intimate and growing acquaintance with the Word of God discovered to Wycliffe more of the errors of Popery. Hence he was led to expose and attack the gross dogma maintained by the Church of Rome, that, on the priest's pronouncing the words of consecration, the sacramental bread in the Eucharist was changed into the real body and blood of the Saviour. "The consecrated bread which we see on the altar," said he, "is not Christ, nor any part of Him, but his efficient sign—*efficax ejus signum*." He denied the sacrifice of the mass, as subverting the one only and sufficient sacrifice for sin offered up by the Redeemer on the cross. He rejected transubstantiation, as nullifying the living and spiritual presence of the Saviour. This doctrine, in opposition to the Romish dogma of transubstantiation, he boldly taught at Oxford in 1381. The horror and rage of his enemies knew no bounds. His opinions were condemned, and he was called upon to retract them. The alternative placed before him was silence or imprisonment. God shielded his servant from the danger, and gave him courage to vindicate the truth. In a work which he published at this time, under the title of "The Wyckett," he fearlessly pointed out the absurdities which the doctrine of transubstantiation involved. "Since the year of our Lord 1000," said he, "all the doctors have been in error about the

Sacrament of the Altar, except, perhaps, it may be, Berengarius. How canst thou, O Priest, who art but a man, make thy Maker? What! the thing that groweth in the fields—that ear which thou pluckest to-day—shall be a God to-morrow! As you cannot make the works which He made, how shall ye make Him who made the works?" Summoned at length to appear before the Convocation, he produced a two-fold confession, one in Latin and the other in English, vindicating his doctrine of the Eucharist. His opinions were condemned; his connexion with the University as a doctor of theology was dissolved; but further than this the unsettled state of things in the kingdom did not allow the malice of his enemies to go. Our reformer was allowed to retire to his living at Lutterworth, to spend the rest of his days in peace.

There is a tradition that, to escape the violence of his enemies, Wycliffe, thus condemned, retired for a time to Bohemia, where his writings had spread, and had proved greatly useful in diffusing the light of pure truth, and where, it is said, he had opportunities of conversing with and confirming in the faith John Huss, the Bohemian reformer and martyr. Though the tradition of his visiting Bohemia rests on no certain authority, it is known that the Queen of Richard II., Ann of Bohemia, favoured his doctrines, and gained from his writings increased meetness for that heavenly kingdom to which she was early removed.

We must now hasten to the closing scenes of the life

of our early British Reformer. Soon after his retirement to Lutterworth, he received a citation from Pope Urban to appear before him at Rome, with which he refused to comply from ill-health. "He considered his life," says Dr. Townsend, "to be now in the utmost danger. He prepared for martyrdom. The confusion of the times, however, the mutual anathematization of the two Pontiffs (Urban and Clement), the possibility that the power of the Duke of Lancaster would be exerted to protect his person,—even though he disapproved of the extent of his opposition to the Church of Rome,—the great attachment many persons had conceived to his venerable, useful, holy name—all united to protect the Reformer from his enemies." His last days were employed in faithfully preaching the Gospel to his flock at Lutterworth, and the publication of numerous works. On the 29th of December, 1384, while officiating in his church, he fell down on the pavement, struck with paralysis. His sorrowing friends carried him to his own house, where, after lingering forty-eight hours, he resigned his soul to God, and entered into eternal rest. on the last day of the year, in the sixty-first year of his age.

Wycliffe's labours did not end with his death, but continued to bring forth fruit after he was gone to his rest. The Reformation was *begun*, and went forward. The master being removed, his disciples set their hand to the plough, and England was almost won over to the Reformer's doctrines. The Wycliffites multiplied

everywhere. The light of the Gospel spread abroad over the land, and multitudes rejoiced in it. "Times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord" were experienced. Several who had thus received the light of truth sealed their love of it by a martyr's death, among whom the illustrious Lord Cobham took the lead. Wycliffe foretold that from the bosom of monkery would one day proceed the regeneration of the Church. "Thus," says D'Aubigné, "did Wycliffe's piercing glance discover, at the distance of nearly a century and a-half, the young monk, Luther, in the Augustine convent at Erfurth, converted by the Epistle to the Romans, and returning to the spirit of St. Paul and the religion of Jesus Christ. Time was hastening on to the fulfilment of the prophecy. 'The rising sun of the Reformation,' for so hath Wycliffe been called, had appeared above the horizon, and its beams were no more to be extinguished. In vain will thick clouds veil it at times; the distant hill-tops of Eastern Europe will soon reflect its rays; and its piercing light, increasing in brightness, will pour over all the world, at the hour of the Church's renovation, floods of knowledge and life."

"Wycliffe," says Dr. Townsend, "struck the rock in the desert, and the living waters sprung forth, which will flow, and ever shall flow on, till the river of life shall make glad the city of our God, and every living thing shall be healed where those waters flow.* Wycliffe rolled away the stone, and the sheep of Israel drank of

* Ezek. xlvii. 9.

the well. Wycliffe was the voice in the wilderness, preparing the way of the Lord, and renewing the fulfilment of the promise, that every mountain and hill on which the idolatry of the corruption of true religion is practised shall be finally brought low. Wycliffe planted the acorn of the oak, which is still deepening its roots, and extending its branches, and growing up men know not how, till the fowls of the air lodge in the branches of it. Wycliffe brought the solid gold of the Scripture from the cell of the monastery, and the Church did but coin that gold for use when it distributed its precious portions through our daily and yearly services. Wycliffe rose up among the people as the cloud, like the man's hand in the famine and drought in Israel rose from the sea, and presently there was the sound of the abundance of rain. So God poured forth upon his chosen land and people—the British Israel—the showers of the holy rain which refreshed and restored the Churches. Wycliffe commenced the era which may be called the Scriptural period of the Church."

Wycliffe's death was a discouragement to his friends and a triumph to his enemies. But, though the servants of God die, "the Lord liveth." The work of God cannot perish, but steadily advances, and will ultimately triumph. Who can hide or roll back the opening light of morning? "The morning star" sunk beneath the horizon, but the light it heralded increased in splendour. In vain did the Church of Rome strive to hide and extinguish it. A Council at Constance,

more than forty years after his death, condemned the writings and opinions of Wycliffe, ordered his bones to be exhumed and burnt, and his ashes to be cast into the river Swift; but, as Fuller quaintly remarks, "the brook did convey his ashes into Avon, Avon into Severn, Severn into the narrow seas, they into the main ocean. And thus the ashes of Wycliffe are the emblem of the doctrine which now is dispersed all the world over." The Evangelical itineracy of the "Poor Priests," established by the Reformer, and the wide circulation of the Scriptures he had translated, spread the light of Divine truth over the country, and converts were everywhere multiplied; so much so, that Knighton, a persecutor, remarks:—"They were multiplied like suckers from the root of a tree, and everywhere filled the compass of the kingdom, insomuch that a man could not meet two people on the road but one of them was a disciple of Wyckliffe." His followers, to whom the name of *Lollards* was given as a term of reproach, were everywhere persecuted; the circulation of the Scriptures was interdicted under the heaviest penalties; the preachers of the Gospel were arrested, cast into prison, and, in several instances, burnt to death. But in England, as elsewhere, the saying was verified, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church."

CHAPTER XIV.

TIMES OF REFRESHING AT THE REFORMATION—THE GERMAN REFORMATION—LUTHER.

THE REFORMATION is justly considered as one of the most remarkable of those great eras in the advancement of society in knowledge, religion, and freedom, the influence of which will continue to be felt to the end of time. The great and organic changes in society which it introduced give to this event a character of surpassing importance. "The events which then took place had every mark of being under the Divine hand, and were such as to fill the minds of men with awe, and to lead them to recognise the hand of God. The power which tore asunder that immense ecclesiastical establishment that had so long held the whole of Europe in servitude; which dissolved the charm that had so long held kings, and princes, and people spell-bound; which rent away for ever so large a portion of the Papal dominions; which led kings to separate themselves from the control to which they had been so long subjected; and which emancipated the human mind, and diffused abroad the great principles of civil and religious liberty, was well adapted to fill the mind with

awe, and to lead men to recognise the hand and the agency of God." Various causes combined to prepare the way for the glorious Reformation. The close of the fifteenth and the opening of the sixteenth century were pregnant with great events. The discovery of the art of printing, leading on to a revival of learning, became a mighty instrument of change and enlargement of the human mind. "This great and newly-risen power, which as yet has not put forth half its strength, has reformed religion and new-modelled philosophy, has infused a new spirit into laws and overrules Government with a paramount authority, makes the communication of mind easy and instantaneous beyond example, confers a perpetuity unknown before upon institutions and discoveries, and gives those wings to science which it has taken from time."* Closely connected with this, though prior to this, was the discovery of America, a new world to the men of those times, and other discoveries which followed in rapid succession, awakening the human intellect from the long sleep and stupor of the dark ages, urging on that spirit of inquiry which prepared the way for the Reformation. It was the age of great men; and mighty were the upheavings and struggles of mankind for the overthrow of ecclesiastical and civil despotism in every shape and form. The persecutions, sufferings, and labours of the faithful witnesses of the pure faith of the Gospel, had diffused widely that light of Divine

* Douglas, on the Advancement of Society.

truth which the hierarchy of Rome had sought in vain to extinguish. The historian of the Reformation strikingly remarks:—"Those heavenly powers, which had lain dormant in the Church since the first ages of Christianity, awoke from their slumber in the sixteenth century, and this awakening called the modern times into existence. The Church was created anew, and from that regeneration have flowed the great developments of literature and science, of morality, liberty, and industry, which at present characterizes the nations of Christendom. None of these would have existed without the Reformation. Whenever society enters upon a new era, it requires the baptism of faith. In the sixteenth century God gave to man this consecration from on high by leading him back from mere outward profession and the mechanism of works to an inward and lively faith. This transformation was not effected without struggles,—struggles which presented at first a remarkable unity. On the day of battle, one and the same feeling animated every bosom: after the victory, they became divided. Unity of faith indeed remained, but the difference of *nationalities* brought into the Church a diversity of forms." *

It is a remarkable fact, as showing the Reformation to be the special work of God, that in its commencement it was not confined to any one single country, but that simultaneously it began in various countries. To quote the words of D'Aubigné,—“As in spring-time

* Dr. Merle D'Aubigné.

the breath of life is felt from the sea-shore to the mountain top, so the Spirit of God was now melting the ice of a long winter in every part of Christendom, and clothing with verdure and flowers the most secluded valleys, and the most steep and barren rocks. Germany did not communicate the light of truth to Switzerland, —Switzerland to France,—France to England; all these lands received it from God just as no one region transmits the light to another; but the same orb of splendour dispenses it direct to the earth. Raised far above men, Christ, the day-star from on high, at the period of the Reformation, as at the first introduction of the Gospel, was the Divine source whence came the life of the world. One and the same doctrine suddenly established itself in the sixteenth century at the domestic hearths, and in the places of worship, of nations the most distant and dissimilar. It was, because the same Spirit was everywhere present, producing the same faith.” “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.”*

It is a further confirmation of the Divine agency in the Reformation to observe, that to whatever causes the work was indebted for its success, it was principally to the conduct of the Reformers, vindicating *the supreme authority and sufficiency of Holy Scriptures*, as the one and only standard of faith and practice, and the right of every man to search the Scriptures and follow their guidance. Thus “the weapons,” by which the Re-

* Zech. iv. 6.

formers attacked and conquered Romish superstition and tyranny, "were not carnal, but mighty through God." The "carnal weapons" of State policy, when used in its favour, as sometimes happened, rather checked and impaired the great work. The Reformation is the triumph of the Word of God, and of that faith which it inspires and produces. Count Agenor De Gasparin justly observes, and his remarks are admonitory to ourselves:—"Let us boldly commend and bring prominently forward that *return* to Scripture, and that *re-establishment* of its authority, which is the admirable and undeniable feature of the Reformation. In spite of all its inevitable shortcomings, the great movement of the sixteenth century has no more striking characteristic than this;—it sprung from the Bible,—it fought in the name of the Bible,—it prevailed by the help of the Bible; and its enemies (Popery and Infidelity) since then *have attacked*—at the present day *do attack*—and to the end of time *will attack* it—by attacking the Bible. Protestantism is nothing else than Christianity brought back after many wanderings, to the Bible from which it had its birth, and it grows weak, or rises anew in redoubled strength, just in proportion as it forsakes or maintains the authority of the Bible." *

There are who condemn the Reformation as an evil,—as disturbing public order,—and causing greater evils,

• "The School of Doubt, and the School of Faith," by Count Agenor De Gasparin.

than it was intended to correct. By such, the tyranny and evils of the dominant Church of Rome at the time, are strangely overlooked. Rulers and their subjects everywhere groaned beneath its despotism, as "a yoke which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear," repressing all the noble aspirations of mankind for knowledge, freedom, and religious advancement. The long-continued schisms in the Papacy,—rival Popes at Rome, and at Avignon, fulminating their anathemas against each other, and each claiming supremacy and infallibility,—was matter of general scandal. The object of the heads of the Romish Church, claiming to be the vicegerents of Him who declared that "his kingdom was not of this world," was to exalt the Church into a Christian monarchy, to which princes and their subjects were to submit and do homage. The nepotism of the Popes in bestowing the highest preferments of the Church on foreigners, on favourites, and relatives of doubtful birth and depraved character, occasioned widespread discontent and reprehension. Novelties in faith and practice were decreed by Popes who claimed sole authority to do so, and were enforced, contrary to the decisions of Councils by whom they were condemned. Eugenius IV. attempted to enforce, though afterwards he was compelled to recall it, the monstrous dogma, that "there was no appeal from the sentence of the Pontiff to a General Council even in matters of faith!" The laity were deprived of the cup in the Eucharist. Reputed saints, whose character renders their names

a disgrace to the hagiography of the Church of Rome were canonized by the authority of the Popes alone, whose growing ambition, tyranny, and immorality produced a general cry for a Reformation of the Church; and this was increased by the blood-thirstiness and cruelty shown to all who dared to profess a purer faith; and the perfidy of the Church in violating the Imperial pledge of safety given to John Huss, and Jerome of Prague; the burning to death of these noble martyrs at Constance, the former on July 7, 1415, and the latter on July 19, 1416, shook the faith, and roused against the Church the indignation of all classes. Men were led to examine the foundations of that authority, the exercise of which occasioned so much misery and oppression. They were aided and stimulated in this by the spread of the pure truth of Holy Scripture, which had been silently but widely diffused by the persecuted evangelists of a purer faith, who had spread it at the hazard of liberty and life, and had dared to die for it. The enlargement of men's minds, by causes before noticed, by the spirit of discovery then so successful, the invention of printing—and the revival of learning—all contributed to the same result. The councils of the Church, which the Popes strove in vain to hinder and control, which met at Pisa, Constance, and Basle, ventured to advance opinions and pass decrees, which shook the very foundations of Papal supremacy and infallibility. The Council of *Pisa*, convoked without the authority of the rival

Popes, Benedict XIII. and Gregory XII., dared to cite those Pontiffs to appear before them, and, after a judicial process, deposed them "*as apostates from the faith, infamous for crimes and perjured!*" At the Council of Constance, A.D. 1414, Pope John was deposed; and it was decreed that "*the authority of General Councils proceeded immediately from Christ, and was above a Pope*, who was subject to General Councils, and bound to obey them in all things pertaining to the faith." Such opinions and decrees, promulgated by councils composed of rulers and members of the Romish Church at such a time, could not fail to shake and undermine the fabric of Romish infallibility and supremacy. In this state of things we find the proximate causes of the Reformation and its justification. It was manifest, and the general feeling was, that the time had arrived when these evils could be no longer tolerated, when God would work great deliverance for his Church and people. When the long night of superstition and tyranny was at the darkest, then the morning of light and deliverance dawned, and "*times of refreshing*" came "*from the presence of the Lord.*"

The wisdom of God is seen in the instrument raised up and fitted for the accomplishment of the Reformation. It was necessary that the leader in this great work should be one who should come in "*the spirit and power of Elias,*" the great Reformer of the Jewish Church in a corrupt age. Such was *Martin Luther*,—

a poor Augustine Monk,—the great German Reformer. He was a man of unflinching and indomitable courage. He was inured to patient endurance by previous poverty and suffering. He had felt keenly the bondage and the bitterness of that antichristian system which he was destined to uproot and destroy. He had experienced the power, the blessing, and love of Gospel truth, the treasures of which he had to unlock and impart to others. Strong in faith, he was undismayed at the sight of opposition and difficulties which had caused other, even the stoutest, hearts to fear and tremble. He felt that God was with him,—this was his “refuge and strength;” and counting not his life dear unto himself, he girded himself in the panoply of heaven for the holy warfare against the beleaguered hosts of Rome. Every step he took was energy,—every blow he struck was conquest; and the result was—the glorious Reformation,—the emancipation of millions from the darkness, the superstition, and tyranny of Popery.

It is not intended here to give the *life* of Luther; others who have written the history of that remarkable man have done this: we can only in this sketch notice those parts of his history which have a direct bearing on the object of our present inquiry. Luther, the child of poor, honest, and industrious parents, was born at Isleben in Saxony, Nov. 10, 1483. His father was a miner. God in this, as in other instances, chose the poor and weak things of the world to confound the wise

and mighty, "that no flesh should glory." Zuingle, the great Reformer of the Swiss, was the son of a shepherd of the Alps; Melancthon, the reviver of learning, was taken from the shop of an armourer; Luther was the son of a humble miner! "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of man." It has been truly remarked, that the first epoch of the life of man, that in which he is formed and developed under the hand of God, is always important; in it lies the germ of the future man. This was remarkably the case with respect to Luther. How often is there to be marked in this—what is overlooked at the time—a special providential training and preparation for the future. Hence the historian observes:—"A knowledge of the reformation that took place in the heart of Luther affords a key to the Reformation of the Church. It is only by the study of the individual work that we can clearly comprehend the general work; those who neglect the former will never know more of the latter than its forms and its outward seeming. They may acquire a knowledge of certain occurrences and certain results, but they will not know the intrinsic nature of that renovation, because the vital principle that animated it must remain for them a hidden thing. Let us, therefore, study the Reformation in Luther, before examining it in the events that changed the face of Christendom."*

His parents, knowing its importance, secured for him in

* Merle D'Aubigné.

his childhood the best education in their power. The impetuosity which marked the man, betrayed itself in the boy, and often subjected him to painful discipline. His mind appears early to have been under the influence of deep and vivid religious impressions, producing in him "the spirit of bondage unto *fear*." At one time, we are told, he could not even hear the name of Jesus Christ pronounced but he became pale with fear and dread. This spirit of bondage and fear, with which he had long and frequent struggles, was a preparation for the glad tidings of the Gospel, and for that "joy and peace in believing," which he afterwards attained and manifested. His rapid progress in learning induced his father to send him to the school of the Franciscans at Magdeburg, at the age of fourteen. Here he endured great hardships from poverty. God raised him up friends in Conrad Cottas, the Burgo-master, and his wife, who received him into their house, and treated him as their son. At Magdeburg his advance in learning was rapid, and his religious feelings assumed a deeper and more decided character. At the age of eighteen, his father, desiring that he might attain distinction by the study of *Law*, sent him to the University of *Erfurth*. Here he applied himself diligently to the study of the philosophy of the Middle Ages. By this study of the scholastic system, and of the writings of the most eminent casuists, he was secretly, and unknown to himself, prepared for those subtle controversies in which he was afterwards

to be engaged. At this time, however, he thirsted for higher and heavenly knowledge, which he could only receive from God and his holy Word, and for this he prayed most earnestly. One day, examining the books of the University library, he opened a volume but little known at that time, and what was his joy and surprise to find it was *the Bible*! "His interest is excited to a high degree; he is overcome with wonder at finding more in the volume than those fragments of the Gospels and Epistles which the Church had selected to be read in the churches through every Sunday of the year. Till then he had supposed these constituted the entire Word of God; and now, behold how many pages, how many chapters, how many books, of which before he had not had a notion! His heart beat as he held in his hand that Scripture all divinely inspired. He devoured with avidity, and with feelings beyond description, all those Divine pages." Again and again he returned to the library to peruse that precious volume, to him the never-failing spring of light and comfort. One day, walking in the fields with a friend, they were overtaken by a violent storm of thunder and lightning. His friend was suddenly struck dead by the lightning! Affrighted and horrified by this awful event, he at once formed the resolution of giving up the study of the Law, of forsaking the world, and adopting the monastic life. He entered the Convent of the Augustines on the 17th of August, 1505, at the age of twenty-one years and nine months.

According to the superstitious notions which then prevailed, he looked upon an ascetic life as meritorious, and the sure way to that holiness and peace which his soul so ardently desired. His experience, however, soon taught him his error. What the inspired Apostle remarks of some in his days, accurately describes the conduct and experience of Luther at this time:—“They being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.”* Our young monk was willing to do hard things, to mortify the flesh, to endure fastings and vigils, to work out his own salvation, but he soon learned that this was not the way to peace and holiness:—“I tormented myself to death,” he says, “to procure peace with God to my troubled heart and agitated conscience, but, surrounded with horrible darkness, nowhere did I find peace.” At this time, and while in this state of mind, he attracted the notice and favour of *Staupitz*, a man distinguished for learning and piety, who, by the study of the Bible and the writings of St. Augustine, had been led to the knowledge of the Saviour and the love of Evangelical truth. Staupitz was the Vicar-General of the Monastic Order to which Luther belonged, and at this time visited the monastery at Erfurth. To Luther this visit proved “a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.” To Staupitz he was encouraged to unveil the sorrows

* Rom. x. 3.

and anxieties of his mind. "Why," said Staupitz to him, "dost thou torment thyself with all these speculations and these deep thoughts? Look to the wounds of Jesus Christ—to the blood He hath shed for thee; there will God's grace appear to thee. Instead of making thyself a martyr for thy faults, cast thyself into the arms of the Redeemer,—confide in Him, in the righteousness of his life, in the expiation of his death. Do not give way; God is not irritated against thee,—it is thou who art irritated against God. Listen to the Son of God. He became man to give the assurance of Divine favour. He says to thee: Thou art my sheep; thou hearest my voice; none shall snatch thee from my hand." All this seemed to Luther too good news to be true. "How," said he, "can I dare to believe in God's favour so long as I am without any real conversion? That He will accept me, I must be changed." His venerable guide shows him there can be no real conversion so long as a man **FEARS** God as a severe judge. "What will you say," exclaims Luther, "to so many consciences, on which a thousand insupportable prescriptions are imposed to fit them for gaining heaven?" The reply of his friend was to him as a voice speaking from heaven: "There is no true repentance," replied Staupitz, "save that which begins with the love of God and of righteousness. What others imagine to be the end and accomplishment of repentance, is, on the contrary, but its commencement. To be filled with love for goodness, thou must first be

filled with love for God. If thou wilt be converted, pursue not all these mortifications and martyrdoms. *Love Him who hath first loved thee.*" These words sunk deep into the heart of Luther, opened to him a door of hope before unknown, and led him to examine the Scriptures more closely. He says: "There was for me no more bitter word in the Scriptures than the word *repentance*, but now there is none sweeter and more pleasant to me. Oh, how sweet are God's precepts when we read them not alone in books, but also in the precious wounds of the Saviour!"* This providential visit of the Vicar-General to the Monastery of Erfurth was one, and the principal, of the means blessed of God to lead the mind of Luther to the knowledge of Evangelical truth—of securing to him a judicious friend, whose counsels were of great use to him in after days—of introducing him to a station of usefulness, in which he was to commence that great work for which God had been preparing him by that soul-discipline through which he had been passing. Soon after this he was ordained Priest; and by the recommendation of Staupitz to the good Prince Frederick, Elector of Saxony, Luther was appointed Professor of the University of *Wittemberg*. At Wittemberg his readings of the Bible with the students, his theological lectures on the Psalms and the Epistle to the Romans, and his earnest preaching, awakened general attention and excited deep interest. It is

* Merle D'Aubigné.

related, that one day, coming to the 17th verse of the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, he read in his exposition the words of Habakkuk, "*The just shall live by faith.*" The words struck him. "There is," he remarked, "for the just a different life from that of the rest of men, and that life is given by faith. This word which he receives into his soul, as if God himself had put it there, unveils to him the mystery of Christian life, and increases to him that life." We shall have occasion to remark, that the precious truth thus brought home to his mind by the words of the Prophet, became afterwards the means of leading him to the enjoyment of true peace, by leading him to a clear knowledge of the great doctrine of the sinner's justification by faith by the merits of Christ, by which he was enabled to expose and overthrow the great system of Romish error and superstition.

In 1511-1512, Luther went on a special mission to *Rome*. Some misunderstanding had arisen between several convents of his Order and their Vicar-General. Luther was selected as the most proper person to settle these points of difference at the Court of Rome. He went thither expecting to find Rome the seat of sanctity, but he was fearfully disappointed. What he witnessed there of the luxury, the venality, the all-pervading corruption and superstition of the priesthood and of all classes of the people, filled him with horror, and shook his faith in the purity and infallibility of the Romish Church. Though his mind had

received Evangelical light, it was not yet received with that clearness and power to free him from Romish superstition and dependance. He, therefore, visited the different churches, altars, and holy places, performed the penances and rites, then and still regarded as entitling to indulgences, and as conferring merit with God. Near the magnificent Basilica of St. John Lateran and the Lateran Palace is a chapel, said to contain the *Scala Sancta*, the identical holy stairs from Pilate's house, up and down which the Redeemer walked at the time of his passion, and which, it is alleged, contain the marks of the drops of his blood with which it had been sprinkled by the suffering Saviour! To ascend and descend these sacred stairs on the knees is a performance to which successive Popes have attached a certain amount of indulgences, entitling to the remission of sins. When we stood on the spot, and witnessed the performance of this superstitious presence, we thought of Luther. "One day," relates his historian, "wishing to gain an *indulgence*, which the Pope had promised to whosoever should ascend on his knees what was known by the name of Pilate's Staircase, the poor Saxon monk humbly toiled up those steps which they told him had been miraculously transported from Jerusalem to Rome. But whilst he was performing this meritorious act, he thought he heard a voice of thunder crying to him from the bottom of his heart, as at Wittemberg, 'The just shall live by faith!' This phrase, which

twice before had smote him like the voice of an angel of God, resounded incessantly and loudly within him. He springs upright in alarm on the steps along which he was dragging his body; he abhors himself; he is ashamed to see to what a degree superstition has debased him; and he flies far from the place of his folly. This energetic text has some mysterious hold upon the life of Luther; it was a creative word for the Reformer and the Reformation. It was with it that God then said, '*Let there be light, and there was light.*'"

This may be regarded as the most important crisis, the great turning-point, in the life of Luther. The great truth of the sinner's justification with God by faith, revealed and applied to his soul, produced a mighty change in all his views and feelings. The truth he had thus been taught emancipated him from his former reliance on Romish superstitions and fruitless efforts to *establish* a righteousness of his own: he now "*submitted* to the righteousness of God," relied by faith on the merits of the Saviour for salvation, and sought "the sanctification of the Spirit" to make him holy and meet for eternal life. The penances, fastings, mortifications of the flesh, and other superstitious rites enjoined by the Church as meritorious, now appeared to him as worthless. He could say with the Apostle St. Paul, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge

of Christ Jesus my Lord : for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." * His own words supply the best comment on this passage :—"Though," he says, "I was a holy and irreproachable monk, my conscience was yet full of disturbance and torment. I could not bear the phrase of God's *justice*. I did not love that just and holy God who punishes sinners. But when by the Spirit of God I comprehended these words ("the just shall live by faith"), when I learned how the sinner's justification proceeds from the pure mercy of the Lord by means of faith . . . then I felt as it were a new man born within me, and I entered through wide-spread doors into the very paradise of God." Writing to a friend afterwards, he says : "I desire to know what your soul is doing ?—whether, wearied at length of its own righteousness, it learns to refresh itself, and to rest in the righteousness of Christ ? The temptation of presumption in our age is strong in many, and specially in those who labour to be just and good with all their might, and at the same time are ignorant of the righteousness of God, which in Christ is conferred upon us with a rich exuberance of gratuitous liberality. They seek in themselves to work that which is good, in order that they may have con-

* Phil. iii. 7—9.

fidence in standing before God, adorned with virtues and merits, which is an impossible attempt. You, my friend, used to be of the same opinion, or, rather, this same mistake. So was I; but now I am fighting against the error, but have not prevailed." It was the consequence of these new views and feelings, that on his return from Rome the teaching of Luther was of a new and decidedly Evangelical character—that it awakened general attention—that, while it was blessed to the enlightenment and consolation of many, it roused the prejudice and hostility of others, who began to suspect and accuse him of heresy in holding and preaching doctrines contrary to the faith, and subversive of Romish purity and infallibility. It was thus God was training and preparing Luther for the great work of the Reformation, on which he was soon to enter. He was, as we have seen, already girding on his armour for the great conflict near at hand. Unknown to him at the time, his acquaintance with Staupitz, his Vicar-General, was the providential means of his being placed at Wittemberg, where the conflict was to begin, and of securing for him the favour and protection of the Elector Frederick, who was used by Providence as an important instrument for protecting the Reformer, and furthering the great and glorious work of the Reformation.

CHAPTER XV.

TIMES OF REFRESHING AT THE REFORMATION.—THE
GERMAN REFORMATION.—LUTHER (*continued*).

THE time of direct conflict with the Church of Rome,—of uplifting the banner of truth,—is at length come. Luther's teaching produced a wide-spread and mighty effect. What the monk taught at Wittemberg soon found its way to other monasteries, and commended itself to men of thoughtful and serious minds. The light thus enkindled made its way to the schools of the learned, the palaces of princes, and among all classes; promoting that spirit of inquiry and love of freedom which so marked the commencement of the sixteenth century. At this time, and in this state of public feeling, occurred an event which called forth Luther to his great work. Leo X., of the noble Florentine House of Medici—proud and magnificent, the liberal patron of arts and learning—then filled the Papal Chair. To replenish his exhausted treasury, under the pretext of completing the magnificent Church of St. Peter's at Rome, Leo authorized a sale of *Indulgences*. Rightly to appreciate this act,

and the influence it had on the Reformation, it is necessary to understand the doctrine and practice of the Church of Rome in reference to *Indulgences*. The Council of Trent—the *last* General Council authoritatively assembled by the Church, the canons and decrees of which represent the faith and practice of the Church of Rome at the *present* time—declares in her Tenth Article: “I affirm also, that the power of indulgences was left by Christ in his Church, and that the use of them is very salutary to Christian people.”* It is necessary to advert to another dogma of the Church to understand this: the doctrine of *works of supererogation*. The Church of Rome teaches, that it is possible for men, by conforming to certain imaginary counsels of perfection, and by performing certain voluntary works over and above what the law of God commands, to attain to superior virtue, and thereby accumulate a *surplusage* of merit, which can be made available to others to secure for them remission of sins and admission to heaven. This superabundant merit, so accumulated, is regarded as the treasure of the Church, and the Pope, as the head of the Church and the Vicegerent of Christ, claims the power of distributing and dispensing it to whom he pleases, by granting *indulgences*, in consideration of meritorious services rendered to the Church—for the performance of certain rites and penances, or for money by which

* “*Professio Fidei Catholicæ Secundum Concilium Tridentinum ex Bullâ Pii Papæ IV.*”

they have been bought. This statement of the doctrine and practice of their Church is denied by the apologists of Rome. We fortify and confirm the statement on the authority of their boasted St. Thomas, who is regarded as one of the pillars of their Church. He says: "There actually exists an immense treasure of merit, *composed of the pious deeds and virtuous actions which the saints have performed, beyond what is necessary for their own salvation, and which are, therefore, applicable to the benefit of others.* The guardian and dispenser of this precious treasure is the Roman Pontiff, and, of consequence, he is empowered to assign to such as he thinks proper a portion of this inexhaustible source of merit, *suitable to their respective guilt, and sufficient to deliver them from the punishment due to their sins.*" Pilgrimages to the tombs of martyrs and certain holy places—joining in the Crusades for the rescue of Palestine from the Turks—assisting in the extirpation of heretics, including under this name the professors of the true Gospel and witnesses for the truth against the errors of Rome,—were considered meritorious works, entitling to indulgences. Pope Urban VIII., in a Bull which bears date May 25, 1643, proclaimed an Indulgence to the Irish, as the reward of the meritorious work of extirpating *heretics—i.e., Protestants*—from among them. This Bull closes in the following words:—"To all and every the aforesaid Christians in the Kingdom of Ireland, so long as they should inclicate against the said heretics and other

enemies of the Catholic faith, *he did grant a full and plenary indulgence, and absolute remission of all their sins*, desiring all of them to be partakers of this precious treasure !” * This doctrine and practice of the Church of Rome, though somewhat restrained and modified by the enlightenment of modern times, remains much the same. Travellers in Italy, and Germany, and other Papal countries, will everywhere see placarded in their churches, and on the doors of their churches, notices of “*Plenary Indulgences.*”

This monstrous and blasphemous doctrine and practice, from the flagrant abuse of it at the time, roused the spirit of Luther to the great work of the Reformation. Under the pretext of raising money to complete the building of St. Peter's at Rome, Leo X. had authorized a sale of Indulgences. Tetzels, a Dominican, was entrusted with the execution of this unholy traffic in Germany. To recommend the article he had to vend, he employed the most extravagant and blasphemous expressions to set forth its value and efficacy. He unblushingly proclaimed their efficacy for the full remission of all sins, and for the immediate liberation of souls from Purgatory ! The following is the form of absolution used by Tetzels :—“ May our Lord Jesus Christ have mercy upon thee, and absolve thee by the merits of his most holy passion. And *I*, by his

* “ Church of England a Faithful Witness against the Errors and Corruptions of the Church of Rome.” By the Author. Pp. 268—271.

authority, that of the blessed Apostles, Peter and Paul, and of the Most Holy Pope, granted and committed to me in these parts, do absolve thee—first, from all ecclesiastical censures, in whatever manner they have been incurred; and then, *from all thy sins, transgressions, and excesses, how enormous soever they may be, even such as are reserved for the cognizance of the Holy See, and as far as the Keys of the Holy Church extend. I remit to you all punishment which you deserve in Purgatory on their account, and I restore you to the holy Sacraments of the Church, to the unity of the faithful, and to that innocence and purity which you possessed at baptism; so that when you die the gates of punishment shall be shut, and the gates of the paradise of delights shall be opened; and if you shall not die at present, this grace shall remain in full force when you are at the point of death.* In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”* In addressing the people, Tetzel is said to have used the following awful language:—“*If any man purchase letters of indulgence, his soul may rest secure with respect to his salvation. The souls confined in Purgatory, for whose redemption indulgences are purchased, as soon as the money tinkles in the chest, instantly escape from that place of torment, and ascend into heaven!*” This shameful sale of pardons excited the disgust of all reflecting minds. Luther had felt heavily the burden of sin—had tried in vain all the prescrip-

* “Secker’s Comment.,” lib. i., p. 14.

tions of Rome to obtain pardon and peace to his soul. He had been taught by the Holy Spirit and by the Holy Scriptures a "more excellent way," that remission of sin was only "through the blood of Christ." He was therefore roused by the love of truth and love of souls boldly to bear his protest against this blasphemous doctrine and practice of Romish pardons and indulgences. Tetzel had reached Juttenbock, four miles from Wittemberg; the Elector of Saxony had forbidden him to enter his State; and to Juttenbock multitudes flocked to the sale of pardons. Luther faithfully and boldly preached against this abomination. He rested not here, but, on the eve of the great festival of All Saints, October 31, 1517, he affixed to the gates of the Church at Wittemberg his celebrated "Ninety-five Theses on Indulgences," and thus threw down the gauntlet of defiance against Rome. Great was the wrath and opposition which this provoked on the part of the Papists; but the Reformer went forth in the strength of God and his truth, undismayed. He was cited to appear at Rome; and then, instead of this, to appear before Cardinal Cajetan, at that time attending a Diet of the Emperor at Augsburg, as Papal Legate, to whom this cause was referred. The orders to the Cardinal from the Pope were, that if Luther refused to retract his errors, he was forthwith to be seized and sent a prisoner to Rome; and that any prince, prelate, or State, or city, offering him an asylum, was to be placed under an interdict. The

friends of Luther, alarmed for his safety, advised him to conceal himself for a while. He replied: "Cowardly men wish me not to go to Augsburg, but I am resolved to be there. Let the will of the Lord be done! Jesus Christ reigns at Augsburg, and even in the midst of his enemies. Let Christ live; let Luther and every sinner die; according as it is written, 'Let the God of my salvation be exalted.' " The intrepid and devoted Reformer arrived at Augsburg. If the courage of the Prophet Elijah, boldly standing alone on Mount Carmel witnessing for God and his truth in the midst of Baal's four hundred false prophets, is justly regarded as a sublime spectacle,—Luther's appearance before the Diet at Augsburg can hardly be considered as less so. Here his friends, to whose care his kind and protecting Prince had commended him, showed him no small kindness and sympathy. Knowing and fearing the cruel designs of his enemies, they urged the necessity, and obtained for him a safe-conduct from the Imperial Government. Thrice did he appear before the Diet and the Legate of Rome. The crafty Cardinal and those associated with him employed all their subtlety in vain to induce him to retract, what they called, his errors, and submit to Rome. Boldly and unflinchingly did he refute the errors of the Church and defend the truth of the Gospel. At length, having thus faithfully accomplished his mission, his friends, and especially those whom his Prince had entrusted with his safety, considering his longer stay

at Augsburg unsafe, advised and contrived the means of his secret departure. After a journey full of peril, he returned to Wittemberg, where he arrived in safety, 30th October, 1518. "Everywhere," says the historian, "on his road, Luther was the object of general interest. He had yielded nothing; such a victory achieved by a mendicant monk over a representative of Rome filled every one with admiration. Germany seemed avenged on the scornful Italians. The eternal Word had been more honoured than the word of the Pope. That vast power, which had ruled supreme in the world for so many ages, had received a formidable check. Luther's course was a triumph; people exulted in the obstinacy of Rome, in the hope it would bring on her fall. Had she been content with preserving disgraceful gains—had she been prudent enough not to despise the Germans—had she reformed flagrant abuses, perhaps, according to human views, everything would have returned to that state of death from which Luther had awoke. But the Papal See will not yield, and the Doctor will find himself constrained to drag many another error to the light, and to advance in the knowledge and in the manifestation of truth." *

On his return to Wittemberg, Luther became the object of more general attention. Multitudes of students and others gathered around the Reformer, and listened eagerly to his Evangelical instructions. Luther himself advanced in knowledge of the truth,

* Dr. Merle D'Aubigné.

and diligently employed himself in spreading it abroad by his writings and in other ways. As was to be expected, other errors of Rome were discovered, so that at length he was led to call in question, and openly to impugn, the very foundations of Romanism—to deny the supremacy of the Pope, and boldly to appeal from the authority of the Pontiff to a General Council of the Church. All this awakened the anxiety of his Prince and friends for his safety. At length, finding the Reformer intractable, and hoping thereby to check the rapid spread of the new opinions, the Pope issued his Bull condemning Luther, his doctrines, and his writings. At this time of great peril to the Reformer and alarm to his friends, who looked upon his destruction as inevitable, from the united power of the Pope and the Emperor Charles V., it is pleasing to remark the firmness and the courage of the Reformer. Amidst the storm and the tempest his mind was “kept in peace, being stayed upon God, trusting in Him.” “What is coming,” he says, “I know not, and I care not to know, assured as I am, that He whose seat is in heaven has from all eternity foreseen the beginning, the continuation, and the end of this affair. Wherever the blow may fall, I am without fear. A leaf cannot fade from the tree without the will of our Father; how much less, then, we! It is a little matter to die for the Word, since that Word, which became incarnate for us, died first itself. We shall rise again with it; and passing through what it hath passed through, we

shall arrive where it is arrived, and dwell with it through all eternity." Again he writes :—"After all, let them destroy my works. I desire no more; for my only wish has been to lead souls to the Bible, so that they should afterwards neglect all my writings." "Great God, had we knowledge of the Scriptures, what need would there be of my books? I am free by the grace of God, and Bulls neither comfort nor alarm me. My strength and my consolation are in a place where neither men nor devils can reach them." In this state of things, he published (Nov. 4, 1520) an essay, "Against the Bull of Antichrist," in which he boldly exposes and refutes the statements of the Pope's Bull and the errors of Rome. A bolder act soon followed. On the 10th of December following, having prepared a pile of wood, in a public place near one of the gates of Wittenberg,—at the head of a great procession of the professors and students of the University and the inhabitants of the city, Luther proceeded to the spot, caused the fire to be lighted, and cast into it the book of the Romish Canon Law, and the Pope's Bull of condemnation of himself and writings, exclaiming at the time, "Because thou hast troubled and put to shame the Holy One of the Lord, so be thou troubled and consumed by the fire of hell!"

Our present limits forbid us to follow the stream of Luther's history—to notice events as they occurred in detail. The election of Charles V. to the Imperial Headship of the German Empire at this time, seems to

have inspired the hierarchy of Rome with fresh courage and hope. Loud and general was the cry from all parts and from all classes of Germany for a reformation of the abuses of the Church. The Pope issued a second Bull, calling upon Luther to retract, and in default of this, condemning him as an incorrigible heretic, fitted for destruction. The time was artfully chosen, as a Grand Diet was to be held at Worms, which would be attended by the new Emperor and all the Princes of the Empire. This important Diet was opened with great pomp, January 6, 1521. To this the case of Luther was referred, and he was cited to make his appearance. What had the Reformer or his friends to expect from such an assembly, the management of which would for the most part be in the hands of a bigoted Nuncio of the Pope? His friends used their entreaties in vain, that he would seek his safety, and not appear before the Diet. The heroic man of God replied: "If Jesus Christ do but aid me, I am determined never to fly from the field, nor desert the Word of God. Should they light a fire which should blaze as high as heaven, I will still appear in the name of the Lord, and overthrow the Behemoth. I hear that the Emperor has published a mandate to terrify me. But Christ lives in spite of it; and I will enter Worms though all the gates of hell and the powers of darkness should oppose me." "Tell your master," he said to a messenger from his cautious friend Spalatin, "that though there should be as many devils in Worms

as there are tiles on the roofs of the houses, I would go!" In this spirit and in this strength Luther entered Worms on the 16th of April. Again and again he stood up before the august assembly as the fearless champion of truth. Vain were the efforts of his enemies to shake his firmness, and induce him to retract what they considered his errors. It would not be easy to imagine a more sublime spectacle than that we are now contemplating. The Emperor occupied the throne; near him sat his brother, the Archduke Ferdinand. There were present six Electors of the Empire, twenty-four Dukes, eight Margraves, thirty Prelates, seven Ambassadors, ten deputies from free cities; princes, counts, and barons; the Papal Nuncios,—in all, 204 noble and illustrious personages. Before this august assembly Luther stands up *alone* to plead the cause of God and his truth! He demands that, if in error, they should convince him of his errors from the Holy Scriptures! "Will you or will you not retract?" was the demand of the Chancellor of the Archbishop of Treves. Luther's answer was worthy of him:—"Since your Most Serene Majesty and the Princes require a simple answer, I will give it thus: unless I shall be convinced by proofs from Scripture, or by evident reasons (for I believe neither in Popes nor in Councils, since they have frequently erred and contradicted themselves), I cannot choose but adhere to the Word of God, which has possession of my conscience. Nor can I possibly, nor will I ever, make any recantation, since it is

neither safe nor honest to act contrary to conscience. *Here I take my stand; I cannot do otherwise—God be my help. Amen!*” Urged again and again with unmistakable hints at the consequences of refusing to recant, he persisted in the same reply. Having thus faithfully performed his part, he retired from the Council amidst the acclamations of his friends, and the yells and groans of his enemies. Luther, as may be imagined, was in great peril: some of his enemies advised the violation of the *safe conduct*, under the protection of which he had come to Worms. He received permission to depart from the city, and left Worms on the 26th of April on his return to Wittemberg; but God and his friends, with the knowledge and sanction of the good Elector of Saxony, had provided a place of refuge for him. He had reached the borders of the Thuringian Forest, near Altenstein, when he was stopped and seized by five armed and masked horsemen, who placed him on a spare horse, and, by a long and circuitous route, conducted him to the ancient Castle of Wartzburg. A few days after Luther’s departure from Worms, Charles V., at the instigation of the Pope’s Legate, signed an Edict condemnatory of the Reformer; denouncing him as an excommunicated and notorious heretic,—forbidding all persons, under the penalty of high treason, to receive or protect him; and commanding, that after the expiration of the twenty-one days allowed him by the *safe conduct* he had received, he should be seized and kept

prisoner till the pleasure of the Emperor should be known.

As the reforming Prophet in Israel, having faithfully prophesied against King Ahab and the idolatry of the times, was for a season withdrawn and hidden in a place of safety provided by God, from the malice of his enemies,*—so was Luther, in this time of peril, hidden in the lonely Castle of Wartzburg. His mysterious disappearance at such a time gave rise to various rumours, and excited the worst fears of his friends. It was feared that he had fallen into the hands of his enemies, and rumours were rife that he had been assassinated. But Luther was safe, and hidden at Wartzburg, which he called his "*Patmos*." The historian of the Reformation relates, that on his arrival there, he was conducted to the chamber which was to be his prison, and in which lay the dress of a knight and a sword: he was soon stripped of his ecclesiastical dress and dressed in the knightly garments provided for him, that no one in the castle might know who he was. The people of the castle were only to know the prisoner by the name of the *Chevalier George*. "The mourning of the friends of the Reformation was of long continuance. The spring passed away, a summer, an autumn, and a winter followed; the sun accomplished his annual course, and still the walls of Wartzburg enclosed their prisoner. Truth had fallen doomed to silence by the edict of the Diet; its defender, shut up within the walls

* 1 Kings xvii. 1—7.

of a fortress, had disappeared from the world, without any one being able to tell what had become of him. Alexander, the Pope's Legate, was triumphant: the Reformation seemed lost. . . . But God reigns, and the blow, which seemed sure to crush the cause of the Gospel, served but to save its bold minister, and to spread afar the light of the faith." "The word of the Lord was not bound:" though Luther is withdrawn for a season, all that had happened, and which to many seemed fatal to the cause, "turned out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel." "The word of the Lord," the great truths of the Gospel for which Luther contended, "ran and was glorified." "The time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord" was breaking forth more widely upon Germany and Switzerland and other countries. Even Luther's withdrawal and confinement at Wartzburg were overruled by God for the wider spread and more glorious triumph of the Gospel. By letters which he managed to send to his friends, and which he dated from what he called "the Isle of Patmos," it was made known to them that he was alive and in safety. In a letter he addressed to Melancthon, he says:—"If I be lost, the Gospel will lose nothing; you will succeed me, as Elisha did Elijah, with a double measure of my spirit. Minister of the Word! guard the walls and towers of Jerusalem until the enemy have reached thee. We alone are yet standing in the field of battle; after me, it is thee they will strike." Though often depressed by solitude and

illness, he was strong in faith of the ultimate triumph of the cause of truth, for which he suffered. "If," he writes, "the Pope lays his hands on those who are for me, there will be an uproar in Germany; the more he hastens to crush us, the speedier will be his own fall, and that of all his followers, and I shall be restored to you. God is rousing the minds of many, and stirring up the nations. Let our enemies only squeeze our cause in their arms and try to smother it; it will enlarge beneath their grasp, and come off still more formidable from the wrestling." The long season of Luther's seclusion at Wartzburg, though regretted by his friends, was one of great usefulness. Here he employed his leisure in the study of the Sacred Scriptures, and in writing and sending forth various works confuting the errors of Popery and spreading the truths of the Gospel, to the great joy and edification of his friends, and the confusion of his enemies. Here it was that he begun, and so far as the New Testament is concerned, his great work of translating the Bible into the German language; thus unlocking to his countrymen the precious treasures of Divine truth, which for ages had been denied them by the Church of Rome. This great and glorious work—the crowning work of the Reformation—of giving the Word of God in the German language, was near the heart of Luther; it relieved and cheered his solitary hours at Wartzburg; it was his privilege, after he left Wartzburg, with the assistance of Melancthon, to bring it to com-

pletion. On the 21st of September, 1522, the complete edition of 3,000 copies was published under the simple title, "*The New Testament—German—Wittenberg.*" This accomplished, Luther applied himself to the translation of the Old Testament, which he published in parts, till at length the entire Bible was translated and circulated. The greatness and the value of this work will be best seen from the narrative of his historian :—

"The new translation, written in the very spirit of the sacred books, in a yet virgin tongue, which now for the first time displayed its great beauties, captivated and delighted the humblest of the people, as well as the most exalted. It was a national work, it was the book of the people ; it was more, it was truly the book of God. Enemies could not refuse their approbation to this admirable production, and some indiscreet friends of the Reformation, struck by the beauty of the work, went so far as to deem they could trace in it a second inspiration. This translation served more than any other work of Luther's to propagate Christian piety. The achievement of the sixteenth century was thus placed on a base from which nothing will ever be able to shake it. The Bible given to the people brought back the human mind, which for ages had been wandering in the tortuous labyrinth of scholastics, to the Divine source of salvation. Accordingly, the success of the work was prodigious ; in a short while every copy was disposed of. In the month of December a

second edition appeared. In 1533 they already reckoned seventeen editions of Luther's New Testament printed at Wittenberg; thirteen at Augsburg, twelve at Basle, one at Grimma, one at Leipsig, thirteen at Strasburg. Such were the powerful springs that raised and transformed the Church and the world." *

Such was the design of God in withdrawing Luther for a season from his more public and active labours. We look back to his seclusion in the Castle of Wartzburg, painful and disastrous as it appeared to himself and friends at the time, as ordered in love, for the accomplishment of this great work, as one of the most important epochs of the Reformation. "The Word of the Lord had free course, and was glorified." With joy everywhere, where this blessed Word was circulated, the people drew the water of life from these "wells of salvation." The moral "wilderness and solitary places were glad, and the desert rejoiced and blossomed as the rose." It was truly a "time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord." "The effect produced was immense. The Christianity of the primitive Church, brought forth by the publication of the Holy Scriptures from the oblivion in which it had lain for ages, was then presented to the eyes of the nation; and the sight of it sufficed to justify the attacks of which Rome had been the mark. The simplest men, if they but knew German letters, women and artisans, studied the New Testament with avidity. They carried it about

* Dr. Merle D'Aubigné.

everywhere with them; they soon knew it by heart, and the pages of that book loudly proclaimed to them the perfect agreement of Luther's Reformation with the revelation of God."

Our present limits will only admit of a hasty sketch of Luther's history, and of the progress of the Reformation from this time: for fuller particulars, the reader is referred to the interesting history to which reference has often been made. Luther, after many months of seclusion, was again restored to his friends, with renovated powers and untiring energies to prosecute his great work. Soon after he married, and by this renunciation of his former vows as a monk, and of the dogma of the celibacy of the priesthood, placed himself more decidedly in opposition to Rome. The influence of his doctrines, labours, and writings was surprising; and in a short time spread over Saxony, Germany, Switzerland, and extended to other countries, until a large part of Germany, Prussia, Switzerland, Holland, England, and other countries, renounced communion with the Church of Rome. As was however to be expected, the consequences of so great a revolution of opinion and feeling produced by the Reformation, in many respects were of a nature, both religiously and politically considered, to occasion great anxiety and trouble to the Reformer. The negation and rejection of the authority of the long dominant Church, which in matters of religion had coerced submission and uniformity of belief and practice, and the assertion

of the right of every man, by an appeal to the supreme authority of Holy Scriptures, to be guided in these matters by the exercise of private judgment, could not fail to give rise to that variety of opinion which led to painful controversies among those who embraced the Reformed faith. The Reformation brought into operation principles, from which have resulted the civil and religious liberties of mankind; but their immediate effect was *incidentally* to cause a general collision of opinion and feeling. As one justly remarks:—“The Ecclesiastical consequences of the Reformation have an analogy with what has frequently followed civil contests between rival pretenders to a crown, when the one party, and generally the assailant party, having called to its aid the middle classes, and having, as a bribe, conceded large privileges to them, popular rights and liberties have been permanently secured.” Luther, notwithstanding the painful struggles and controversies in which he was involved, lived long enough to witness and rejoice in the success of the great work in which he had engaged. He rejoiced in the presentation by the Princes of Germany and their divines, who had embraced the Reformation, of the noble apology, or as it is better known under the name of “*The Augsburg Confession of Faith*,” to the Imperial Diet at Augsburg, which met June 20, 1530. In this apology or confession, some of the most powerful princes of the empire, with their nobles and divines, boldly set forth the truths of Holy Scripture, and

claimed the right and freedom of religious worship. Though this appeal and this claim were for a time resisted, they were at length, after painful struggles, recognised and established by the Imperial sanction at Ratisbon, A.D. 1531. This treaty between the Emperor Charles V. and the Protestants, known by the name of the "*Pacification of Nuremberg*," among other things stipulated, "that no person shall be molested on account of religion; that a stop shall be put to all processes begun by the Imperial Chamber against Protestants, and the sentences already passed to their detriment shall be declared void." Thus the Reformation triumphed. "The religious truce concluded at Nuremberg," says Mosheim, "inspired with new vigour and resolution the friends of the Reformation. It gave strength to the feeble, and perseverance to the bold. Encouraged by it, those who had hitherto been only secret enemies to the Roman Pontiff, spurned now his yoke publicly, and refused to submit to his imperious jurisdiction. This appears from the various cities and provinces in Germany, which about this time boldly enlisted themselves under the standard of Luther."*

We must now hasten to the last days of Luther. Worn down in body and mind, through excessive labours, anxieties, and sickness, at times the Reformer experienced long and sore paroxysms of depression and melancholy, which he regarded and spoke of as times

* Mosh. iii. 361.

of "*temptation.*" At such seasons his soul was deeply humbled under a feeling of unworthiness, and in deep confession of that which he spoke of as intemperance of spirit into which he had been occasionally betrayed in his writings and labours. Luther completed his sixty-second year in November, 1545. At Eisleben he was born, and here he died. We learn from his friend and attendant, Justin Jonas, the following interesting particulars of his last days. On the 17th of February, 1546, perceiving his growing weakness, his friends advised him, for the sake of greater repose, to keep quiet in his study. "From time to time," says Jonas, "he would stop, and, looking out at the window, in that attitude (as his custom was) address fervent prayers to God;" then he would say, "I was born and baptized here at Eisleben; what if I should remain or even die here?" Razeberg, the Elector's physician, preserved one of the prayers which he offered while walking up and down in his study. It is in the following words:—"O Lord God, heavenly Father, I call upon Thee in the name of thy most beloved Son Jesus Christ, imploring that, according to thy promise, and for the glory of thy name, thou wouldst graciously hear the prayers which I offer up unto thee, beseeching thee that, as thou hast of thy mercy and boundless goodness, discovered to me the great apostacy and blindness of the Pope before the day of thy last advent, which is at hand, and is to succeed that diffusion of the light of the Gospel which now dawns upon the world; so thou

wouldst graciously preserve the Church of my beloved country in the acknowledgment of the truth, and the unwavering confession of thy uncorrupted word, without failing, even to the end; that the whole world may know that thou hast sent me for this very purpose. Even so, O most blessed Lord God! Amen, and Amen!"

Though Luther passed the day in his study, he did not choose to sup there, but in the large dining-room; observing, that "to be solitary did not help the spirits." During supper he quoted and made observations on many interesting passages of Scripture. The conversation also happening to turn on the question, whether the righteous in a future state of blessedness would recognise those who had been their friends on earth, he gave his opinion decidedly in the affirmative. In the course of more ordinary conversation he remarked, "If I can but establish peace among the Counts, the rulers of my country, I will then go home, lay myself down in my coffin, and give my body for food to the worms." Before supper, he had complained of a pain in the chest, to which he was subject. It was, however, relieved by warm applications. After supper it returned; yet he would not have medical aid called in, but, about nine o'clock, lay down on a couch and fell asleep. He awoke as the clock struck ten, and desired that those about him would retire to rest. When led into his chamber, he said, "I go to rest with God;" and repeated the words of the Psalm,

“Into thy hands I commend my spirit,” &c., and stretching out his hand to bid all good night, he added, “Pray for the cause of God.” He then went to bed; but about one o’clock he awoke Jonas and another who slept in the room with him, and desired that a fire might be made in his study, and exclaimed, “Oh, God! how ill I am! I suffer dreadful oppression in my chest, I shall certainly die at Eisleben!” He then removed into his study without requiring assistance, and again repeating, “Into thy hands I commend my spirit!” He walked backwards and forwards, and desired to have warm clothes brought him. In the meantime his physicians were sent for, as also Count Albert, who presently came with his Countess. All Luther’s friends and his sons were now collected about him; medicines were given him, and he seemed somewhat relieved; and having laid him down on a couch, he fell into a perspiration. This gave encouragement to some present; but he said, “It is a cold sweat, the forerunner of death: I shall yield up my spirit.” He then began to pray, nearly in these words:—“O eternal and merciful God, my heavenly Father, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and God of all consolation! I thank thee that thou hast revealed to me thy Son Jesus Christ; in whom I have believed, whom I have preached, whom I have confessed, whom I love and worship as my dear Saviour and Redeemer, whom the Pope and the multitude of the ungodly do persecute,

revile, and blaspheme. I beseech thee, my Lord Jesus Christ, receive my soul! O heavenly Father, though I be snatched out of this life, though I must now lay down this body, yet know I assuredly that I shall dwell with thee for ever, and that none can pluck me out of thy hands!" He then again thrice repeated the words, "Into thine hands I commend my spirit; thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth!" Also those words, "God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" and that verse of the 68th Psalm,—“Our God is the God of whom cometh salvation: God is the Lord by whom we escape death.” He then became silent, and his powers began to fail him; but when several persons addressed him,—“Reverend Father, you die in the constant confession of Christ, and his doctrine which you have preached?” he distinctly answered, “Yes,” and spoke no more; but about a quarter of an hour afterwards, between two and three o’clock in the morning, “with his hands clasped together, and without a finger or a feature being disturbed, gently breathed his last.”

To what are we to attribute the wonderful success of Luther and the Reformation? The wide-spread and general feeling, among all classes of the rulers and people of Germany, of the corruptions and tyranny of the dominant hierarchy, and of the necessity of reform

of the abuses of the Church; the awakening spirit of inquiry so characteristic of the time; the facilities afforded for the communication of knowledge by the recently discovered art of printing, and the revival of learning; the struggles of the rival princes of the day which agitated the German Empire, producing, as they could not fail to do, a love of liberty; all favoured and prepared the way for that mighty revolution, which, in a few years, took place in the religious opinions of Germany and other countries. But, giving due weight to all these as proximate causes of the Reformation, we must trace the success of Luther and the Reformation to other and more potential causes:—*to the revival of Primitive Christianity, to the setting forth prominently its essential, lifegiving, and sanctifying truths as they are revealed in Holy Scripture.* By the searching of the Word of God, and the teaching of the Holy Spirit, Luther had discovered the great essential doctrines of a sinner's salvation by the grace of God alone,—of justification by faith alone through the merits of the Redeemer. These great truths of the Gospel unveiled to him the fundamental and all-pervading errors of the Church of Rome, and enabled him to expose and refute them. It was in the same way that the great Augustine, by the study of whose writings our Reformer had been instructed and enlightened, was honoured in his days in refuting error and in reviving Primitive Christianity. The history of the Church supplies abundant evidence, that in the degree in which the Church holds

fast and sets forth these essential truths of the Gospel, or obscures and recedes from them; in the same degree real religion has flourished or declined. Luther then might justly call the doctrine of Justification by Faith, "*Articulus Stantis vel Cadentis Ecclesiæ.*" *The Word of God*, which he was the honoured instrument of translating, and which rapidly and widely spread over Germany, was the mighty means of the subversion of Popery, and the triumph of the Reformation. "It is from Scripture and from faith, two sources which, closely considered, are but one, that the Gospel life sprang, and still diffuses itself through the world."

It has been alleged by some who regard the Reformation, to say the least, with but partial approbation, that Luther's doctrine of Justification by Faith was unfavourable to the growth and manifestation of Christian morality and subversive of good works. Such views of the tendency of this doctrine are contradicted by Holy Scripture, by the history of the Church, and by the lives of real Christians. The opinion to which we advert may be traced, in a great measure, to the mistaken views of the meaning and design of Luther in certain parts of his writings, in which he appears to express himself in strong terms against good works. The fact is overlooked, that he speaks against *dependence* on good works as the *meritorious* condition of man's salvation: that in those parts of his writings he has *special reference to those supposed good works insisted on by the Church of Rome as meritorious for*

salvation. Fastings, penances, pilgrimages, mortifications of the flesh and the spirit, enjoined by the Church of Rome as means to sanctification, and the *meritorious* conditions of pardon and eternal life, are the supposed good works condemned by Luther. On the other hand, he most strongly urges the necessity of good works, insisted on in Holy Scripture, as the necessary *evidences* of Christian character, and the *fruits* of that true and living faith, without which no man can be saved. But on this subject it is better to allow Luther to speak for himself:—

“A true and lively faith is opposite to the feigned faith of the hypocrite; and a true faith incites a man to good works through love. He who would be a Christian must be a believer; but no man is a sound believer if works of charity do not follow his faith. Thus, on both hands, the apostle shuts hypocrites out of the Kingdom of God. On the left hand he shuts out all such as *depend* on their works for salvation when he says,—‘Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision;’ that is, no kind of work, but faith alone, without any dependence on what we do, avails before God. On the right, he excludes all slothful, idle persons, who are disposed to say, If faith justifies us without works, then let us have no anxiety respecting good actions; let us only take care and believe, and we may do whatever we please. Not so, ye enemies of all godliness. It is true Paul tells you that faith alone without works justifies.

However, he also tells you that a true faith, after it has justified, does not permit a man to slumber in indolence, but that it worketh by love. The liberty of the Gospel is an inestimable thing; but take care that ye use it not as an occasion to the flesh."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE REFORMATION IN ENGLAND.

THE Reformation, in its particular development under Wycliffe in England, or Luther in Germany, was but the expression of the mind of Europe, which had for centuries been suppressed by pontifical and hierarchical tyranny. Religious, equally with civil, freedom was the growth of centuries and the result of struggles, which gradually, under the providential workings of the Almighty, led onward to the emancipation of many nations from civil and religious despotism. It has been justly remarked:—"The temporary suppression of the will of the people could not change the principles of liberty, nor prevent its eventual triumph. So it was with the Reformation. *The mass of events which is comprehended under that name*, some of which were most objectionable, was but the termination, in a large portion of Europe, of the continued and uniform resistance to the domination of the Bishop of Rome. That resistance was suppressed and burnt out in Spain, Italy, and many other places. It will, however, revive again in those countries; and Rome must change, in spite of

her own laws, or be deserted by the most strenuous advocates of her supremacy." *

In the long interval between the days of Wycliffe and the outbreak of the Reformation in the sixteenth century—during which the cause of truth continued to advance with various degrees of discouragement and success—no event occurred of greater importance than the publication of the New Testament in Greek, with a new Latin translation, by the celebrated *Erasmus* (A.D. 1517). The revival of learning which had taken place, aided as it was by the invention of printing, may be said to have introduced a new era in the literary as well as theological history of Europe. The study of the *Greek* and *Hebrew* was revived. In vain the priesthood inveighed against this, urging that Greek was the parent of heresy, and that all who studied Hebrew became Jews. It was at such a time Erasmus published his Greek Testament. The importance of this work, and its influence on the Reformation, is best stated in the words of the historian:—"The great work of the sixteenth century was about to begin. A volume fresh from the presses of Basle had just crossed the Channel. Being transmitted to London, Oxford, and Cambridge, this book, the fruit of Erasmus's vigils, soon found its way wherever there were friends of learning. It was the *New Testament* of our Lord Jesus Christ, published for the first time in Greek, with a new Latin translation." "This book, in which

* Dr. Townsend.

God has deposited for man's salvation the seeds of life, was about to effect alone, without patrons and without interpreters, the most astonishing revolution in Britain."

"When Erasmus published this work at the dawn, so to say, of modern times, he did not see all its scope. Had he foreseen it he would perhaps have recoiled in alarm. He saw, indeed, that there was a great work to be done, but he believed that all good men would unite to do it with common accord. 'A spiritual temple must be raised in desolated Christendom,' said he. 'The mighty of this world will contribute towards it their marble, their ivory, and their gold; I, who am poor and humble, offer the foundation-stone;' and he laid down before the world his edition of the Greek Testament. Then glancing disdainfully at the traditions of men, he said:—'It is not from human reservoirs, fetid with stagnant waters, that we should draw the doctrine of salvation, but from the pure and abundant streams that flow from the heart of God.' And when some of his suspicious friends spoke to him of the difficulties of the times, he replied:—'If the ship of the Church is to be saved from being swallowed up by the tempest there is only one anchor that can save it; it is the heavenly Word, which, issuing from the bosom of the Father, lives, speaks, and works still in the Gospel.' These noble sentiments served as an introduction to those blessed pages which were to

reform England. Erasmus, like Caiaphas, prophesied without being aware of it."

The enthusiasm it awakened, and the eagerness of all classes to possess Erasmus's New Testament, was intense. "It was in every hand; men struggled to procure it, read it eagerly, and would even kiss it. The words it contained enlightened every heart."* Great was the alarm of the Papal priesthood, who, observing its effects, employed all their subtlety and power to misrepresent and hinder the reading of Erasmus's Greek Testament. The effect of this work was astonishing and glorious, and, under God, more than anything else, helped to prepare the minds of men for the great change now near at hand, and for the translations of the entire Word of God, sent forth a few years after by Tyndale and Coverdale, which superseded that of Wycliffe, the language of which had now become in a measure obsolete. Thus, while Erasmus opened the rich treasures of the Word of God to the learned, Tyndale and Coverdale opened the treasures of Divine truth to the poor and the unlearned,—“So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed.”

At length other events, overruled by God, led the way to a *national* reformation of religion, under Henry VIII. This great event, variously regarded and represented by enemies and friends, requires particular attention to enable us to judge correctly its true

* “History of the Reformation in England,” D'Aubigné.

character and results. It furnishes one among the many facts recorded in history of the wisdom and power of God in overruling even the sinful passions and actions of men for the accomplishment of his designs. The separation of England from the ecclesiastical power of Rome, the casting off the jurisdiction of the Papacy,—events which had such powerful influence on the Reformation in this country,—were urged onward, so far as Henry VIII. was concerned, and undesignedly active in this great revolution, by the determination of that monarch to be divorced from his Queen, Catherine of Arragon, and to contract another marriage. Catherine had been the wife of his brother Arthur, and had been early left a widow. A dispensation from the Pope had been granted, permitting Henry to marry his brother's widow ;—a marriage equally regarded as contrary to the laws of God and the Church. Henry, whether sincerely or not, alleged conscientious scruples as to the lawfulness of this marriage, and sought a dispensation from Pope Clement in 1527 to free him from his marriage vows and enable him to marry again. The tergiversations, hesitation, and refusal of the Pontiff in this matter we stay not to notice : it is sufficient for our present purpose to remark, that the delay and hesitation of the Pope, and the violent and unrestrained passions of the King, brought about that great event we are now considering,—the separation of England from the Papal jurisdiction, the recognition of the independence of our National Church, the Reformation

in England, for which events had been gradually preparing the national mind from the days of Wycliffe. Henry VIII. is rather to be regarded as the *pioneer* than as the *author* of the Reformation in England. He was, undesignedly, a mighty instrument used by God in breaking down and removing out of the way the Papacy, Monasticism, scriptural ignorance—the three great barriers opposed to the Reformation. It is *only* in this way that he can be identified with this great work ; for, however successful the efforts of Henry proved in the overthrow of Papal domination and corruption, he never contemplated the renunciation of Popery, but continued in heart a Papist. As Henry was not, in the true sense of the word, the *reformer* of his people, much less are the ruling passions and faults of that Prince to be identified with the Reformation itself, nor can the Reformation be held responsible for them. Whatever Henry was in character and principle he was so under the moulding influence of Popery ; he was what Popery had made him. He was every inch a Papist, and so, with the slight modifications of Protestant influence, he remained to the last moment of his life. His faults, whatever they were, were the growth of Popery, and not of Protestantism. The following remarks of Sharon Turner are too important to be omitted here:—"All Henry's Court and Parliament and nation were born and educated in the Romish faith, and all they did was therefore the act of (*Roman*) Catholics. A different state of things began

in Edward VI. and Elizabeth's time. *They* were trained up to Protestant principles, and so were the children of most of the subjects of Henry VIII. The acts of these were, therefore, those of *Protestants*. If any of the preceding *Catholics* threw off opinions and habits which they thought wrong they were still Catholics who so acted, and their decisions were the decisions of Catholics discerning what was erroneous, and preferring what their reason and conscience perceived to be preferable. Their children, being educated as Protestants, acted on different principles; they judged as Protestants, as their fathers had judged as Catholics. This distinction is important. The change of Catholics into the new opinions was the verdict of Catholics in their favour; who met them with a Catholic mind and examined them with Catholic prepossessions. The English Reformation was thus the wise and good work of Catholics themselves, correcting the abuses of their own Church, and establishing a purer system of Catholic Christianity: *Protestantism is Catholic Christianity reformed from its Papal corruptions. Romanism is sectarianism compared with apostolic Christianity.*"* We may add to these remarks,—the work of Reformation under Henry did not *originate* a new national Church in this country, but its result was to free the *ancient, independent* Christian Church of England from the usurpations and corruptions of the Church of Rome; it vindicated alike the ancient and rightful independ-

* Sharon Turner's "Modern History," vol. i., p. 573.

ence and the primitive and scriptural faith of the British *national* Church. The great change brought about at the Reformation was not, in the ordinary sense of the term, a *revolution*, but a *re-formation*; it was the *re-forming*, the re-construction of our National Church after its ancient model, and according to the Word of God. The rights and endowments of the Church, whatever they were, belonged to the *National* Church, and cannot, therefore, as alleged by the advocates of Rome, be said to have been wrongfully grasped and retained by Protestants, and applied to a Church to which they did not in right belong: those rights and emoluments which pertained to the Church under Romish *usurpation* equally pertained to the Church as *reformed*. The only difference in these cases is this, that emoluments and rights granted for the upholding of the *national* religion, which had been employed in the support of Papal tyranny and superstition, have been made available to freedom and a purer faith, to the furtherance of true liberty and true religion. The Reformation in England has this peculiarity and advantage above all others, however doubtful the latter may be regarded by some, that it is a *national* reformation, and effected by and with the concurrence of the executive of the State. The Reformation in Germany and other States originated with the *people*, and was, in most instances, opposed by the ruling authorities. The consequence of this was the frequent and unhappy collisions between the reform-

ing parties and their rulers, and the excesses usual in such cases. The peculiar circumstances which, in this country, politically identified, to a considerable extent, the governing authority of the nation with the Reformation, gave it more of a *conservative* character, and assured to it national suffrage and stability. Our King and Parliament early took and maintained the lead in this great change. The political circumstances of the time; the circulation of the Scriptures, though restrained to a great extent, among all classes; the character and influence of those placed in the highest offices both in the Church and in the State, especially of Cranmer, combined with the conduct of the Pope, and the evil and unsubdued passions of the Monarch,—all, with the force of a mighty current, hastened onward the great work far beyond the designs and wishes of Henry:—"Howbeit he meant it not so, neither did his heart think so;" "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water; He turneth it whithersoever He will." "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless, the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand." *

The brevity required in this sketch does not allow us to notice the details, or to mark the steps by which this great change was realized. We have to do with the Reformation as a fact accomplished, and must refer for the particulars to the secular and ecclesiastical historians of the time for further information. Though

* Isa. x. 7; Prov. xxi. 1; Prov. xix. 21.

religious freedom was partially restrained, and that persecuting spirit inherent in Popery, and engendered by it, was manifested, yet scriptural truth rapidly spread through the nation. In a short time the new translations of the Scriptures by Tyndale and Coverdale were widely circulated, eagerly sought after, and read. Cranmer so vigorously exerted himself in this good work, which had received the Royal sanction, that copies of the Scriptures were ordered to be provided for every parish, and placed in the churches, "so as to be conveniently read and heard, as being the very lively Word of God, that every Christian man is bound to embrace, believe, and follow, if he look to be saved." This was indeed a "time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord." In the parsonages, the universities, the palaces, in the cottages of the husbandmen, and in the shops of the merchants, there was an ardent desire to possess and read the Word of God. Multitudes of the aged and the young, too poor to obtain the precious treasure, flocked to the churches to read and hear read the "Word of Life," and "with joy drew water from these wells of salvation." "It was wonderful to see," says Strype, "with what joy this Book of God was received, not only among the learned sort, and those that were noted for lovers of the Reformation, but generally, all England over, among all the vulgar and common people; and with what greediness God's Word was read, and what resort to places where the reading of it was. Everybody that could, bought the book, or

busily read it, or got others to read it to them if they could not read themselves; and divers more elderly people learned to read on purpose."

The Reformation, so far as it was accomplished in the reign and by the authority of Henry VIII., though in its results very important, was but partial and preparatory to its fuller development under his successors. The authority of the Pope in England was utterly abolished; monasteries and similar institutions—the strongholds of superstition and vice—were suppressed; the Scriptures were translated, set up in churches, and, for some years, allowed to be read and freely circulated; the grosser superstitions which had long prevailed were, to some extent, put down and discouraged; and the Gospel was more widely preached; but still Popery generally prevailed. Henry died January 28, 1547. His death removed the great hindrance to the progress of the Reformation, which advanced rapidly under his young and pious successor, Edward VI.; and, though it received a fatal check under the reign of Mary, who committed to the flames a host of glorious martyrs for the faith,* it triumphed, and was finally settled and established in the reign of our truly Protestant Queen

* It is said that no fewer than 288 persons glorified God in the fires of martyrdom in less than three years. Among these appear pre-eminent the great leaders of the Reformation, Rogers, Hooper, Bradford, Latimer, Philpot, Taylor, Cranmer, and others—names which will ever be precious to those who value Evangelical truth and religious freedom.

Elizabeth. Thus, by the overruling and gracious providence of God was brought about and established the glorious Reformation in England, freeing us from Papal darkness and tyranny, and introducing "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord," with which God, notwithstanding our unfaithfulness and ingratitude, has continued to bless us as a Church and nation up to the present day.

The following remarks of Merle D'Aubigné deserve the consideration of those who desire rightly to estimate the moving causes, value, and results of the Reformation in this country. Adverting to the time of the death of Cardinal Wolsey (29th November, 1530), he says:—"Then three movements were accomplished, from which the great transformation of the sixteenth century was to proceed. Each of these movements has its characteristic result.

"The first is represented by Cromwell (Minister of Henry VIII.). The supremacy of the Pope in England was about to be wrested from him, as it was in all the Reformed Churches. But a step further was taken in England. That supremacy was transferred to the person of the king. Wolsey had exercised as Vicar-General a power till then unknown. Unable to become Pope at the Vatican, he had made himself Pope at Whitehall. Henry had permitted his Minister to raise this hierarchical throne by the side of his own. But he had soon discovered that there ought not to be two thrones in England, or, at least, not two kings.

He had dethroned Wolsey, and, resolutely seating himself in his place, he was about to assume at Whitehall that tiara which the ambitious prelate had prepared for himself. Some persons, when they saw this, exclaimed, that if the Papal supremacy were abolished, that of the Word of God ought alone to be substituted. And, indeed, the true Reformation is not to be found in this first movement.

“ The second, which was essential to the renewal of the Church, was represented by Cranmer, and consisted particularly in re-establishing the authority of Holy Scripture. Wolsey did not fall alone, nor did Cranmer rise alone ; each of these two men carried with him the systems he represented. The fabric of Roman traditions fell with the first ; the foundations of the Holy Scriptures were laid by the second ; and yet, while we render all justice to the sincerity of the Cambridge Doctor, we must not be blind to his weaknesses, his subserviency, and even a certain degree of negligence, which, by allowing parasitical plants to shoot up here and there, permitted them to spread over the living rock of God’s Word. Not in this movement, then, was found the Reformation with all its energy and all its purity.

“ The third movement was represented by the martyrs. When the Church takes a new life, it is fertilized by the blood of its confessors ; and, being continually exposed to corruption, it has constant need to be puri-

fied by suffering. Not in the palaces of Henry VIII., nor even in the Councils where the question of throwing off the Papal supremacy was discussed, must we look for the true children of the Reformation. We must go to the Tower of London, to the Lollards' towers of St. Paul's and of Lambeth, to the other prisons of England, to the bishops' cellars, to the fetters, the stocks, the rack, and the stake. The goodly men who invoked the sole intercession of Jesus Christ, —the only head of his people,—who wandered up and down, deprived of everything, gagged, scoffed at, scourged and tortured, and who, in the midst of all their tribulations, preserved their Christian patience, and turned, like their Master, the eyes of their faith towards Jerusalem: these were the disciples of the Reformation in England. The purest Church is the Church under the Cross.

“The father of this Church in England was not Henry VIII. When the King cast into prison, or gave to the flames, men like Hilton, Bennet, Pasmore, Petit, Bayfield, Bilney, and so many others, he was not ‘the father of the Reformation in England,’ as some have falsely asserted; he was its executioner.

“The Church of England was foredoomed to be, in its renovation, a Church of martyrs; and the true *Father* of this Church is our Father which is in heaven.”*

* D'Aubigné on the English Reformation.

The event we have been contemplating—the glorious Reformation, as it is justly called—will be variously regarded by its friends and foes. They by whom its value and results are duly appreciated cannot too highly estimate its importance. The disenthralment of the national mind from civil, religious, and mental slavery, it effected constitutes its transcendent value. It gave a new impulse to national advancement and improvement, which has raised our country to that pre-eminence in power, in freedom, in purity of morals, religion, and benevolence, which renders her the wonder and admiration of the world. The enemies of the Reformation allege against it, its defects. It is matter of wonder and gratitude, seeing how various were the motives influencing those who were the active instruments in bringing about this great change, and the various counteracting influences by which its progress was marked, that so few real defects can be pointed out. It is not fair to test this great event by our *present* views and feelings, which are the results of the superior light and advancement which we now possess and enjoy, and the growth of more than two centuries of civil and religious freedom. If our Reformers, as alleged against them, retained somewhat of Popery, the wonder rather is that so little of it was retained. If it be said, the Ritual of our national Church contains many things in common with the Romish service-books, it should be borne in mind that the anxiety of the Reformers was directed to expunge all that was essentially Popish, superstitious, and anti-

scriptural in faith and worship, and, from a dislike of unnecessary change, to retain these prayers, collects, and rites of great antiquity, and which had been the vehicles of the devotions of the Church in earliest and purest ages.*

There is one charge alleged against the Reformation which requires more particular notice : *the persecutions* which marked the Reformation, especially in the time of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth. It is not denied that persecution did exist. Intolerance of opinions and practices opposed to our own is, to a great degree, inherent in human nature, and common to all. Even our Lord's apostles betrayed this in a manner to call for his rebuke.† There is, however, an important and essential difference between persecution as alleged against Popery and against Protestantism. It is inherent in Popery, and a part of its system. It inculcated and commanded the persecution of those whom it branded with the charge of heresy. If persecution was sanctioned by the Reformers, it was the spirit and the lesson they had learned from the Church of Rome. They were reared in the bosom of that persecuting Church ; but persecution was contrary to the spirit of holy truth which they revived and inaugurated, and directly opposed to those essential principles of the Re-

* See Preface to the Book of Common Prayer : " Of the Service of the Church "—" Of Ceremonies." See also the Thirty-fourth Article of Religion.

† Luke ix. 53—56.

formation which so many of them nobly vindicated by their teaching, their sufferings, and their martyr-deaths; and, as such, persecution is viewed and condemned by all Protestants when inflicted on the ground of religious opinions. If Henry VIII., as he undoubtedly did, persecuted, he did so as a *Papist*, and under the influence of Popery. When the Reformation and its principles became more developed and settled under Elizabeth, it would be easy to show *that no Romanist suffered death for his religion, any otherwise than as it involved him in the guilt and consequences of treason against the Sovereign and the State.* The jealousy with which our Tudor princes, Henry and Elizabeth, guarded the Royal prerogative of supremacy in Church and State against all intrusion and infringement, and the critical circumstances of the times, will account for much of this. The determination of the Pope to regain his lost supremacy over England, and to re-establish Popery, led to many dangerous plots and treasons for the subversion of the monarchy and Church, of which the history of those times furnish many indubitable proofs. Pope *Pius V.* issued a Bull, bearing date the 27th April, 1570, excommunicating our Queen Elizabeth. In this Bull the Pope blasphemously and arrogantly declares, that "the Most High, who ruleth in the heavens, hath appointed the Roman Pontiff, St. Peter's successor, prince over all nations, to root up, destroy, disperse, plant, and build." "In discharge of this office," he proceeds, "and in reliance of His autho-

rity who hath placed us in this extreme throne of righteousness, we declare, out of the plenitude of apostolic power, *Elizabeth*, a heretic and favourer of heretics, and her adherents, to have incurred the sentence of anathema, and to be cut off from the unity of Christ's body; herself, moreover, deprived of her pretended right of sovereignty, and all dominion, dignity, and privilege whatsoever, and her nobles, subjects, and people, and all who have sworn allegiance, released from their obligations of fidelity and service; and we command and interdict all and each of her nobles, subjects, and people, and others aforesaid, from daring to obey her, her monitions, mandates, and laws. Those who shall act otherwise, we bind under a similar sentence of anathema." Who, after this, can blame the Ministers and Parliament of Elizabeth for making it treasonable to acknowledge an authority which supported its assumptions by giving direct sanction to two Irish rebellions, which blessed the Spanish Armada equipped for the conquest of our country, which incessantly exerted itself by its seminary priests in sowing sedition amongst Englishmen, which would have exulted in the tidings of the Sovereign's death by the hand of an assassin? The Bartholomew tragedy of the massacre of the Protestants in France, two years after this, and the Gunpowder Plot soon after under James, will sufficiently explain why Romanists were watched with jealousy, and suffered severely. They suffered on *political*, and not religious grounds, as persons who

rendered fealty and obedience to the Pope, and denied it to the Sovereign and the State under which they lived ; as holding and acting on principles subversive, and aiming at the subversion, of a Protestant State. It is important and just to bear this in mind, to see the injustice and prejudice which charges the persecution of Romanists on the religion of Protestants. The charge of persecution as exercised by *Protestants* against *Protestants* on the score of religious opinions, and with the view of coercing uniformity of faith and worship, rests on very different grounds, and must otherwise be considered and treated when the opportunity of doing this presents itself.

We conclude these remarks in the words of a judicious writer :—"The change which took place in society, without any force but that of opinion, showed that new energies had sprung up, and that the moral world was about to be subjected to new laws. Never had the human faculties been so deeply and universally stirred as by the disputes between Luther and the Church of Rome. Unlike other questions, confined to a single country and to a few speculative men, it shook Europe from one extremity to the other, and every individual was interested in an issue which concerned his own happiness and conduct. Wide was the passage from the stupor and servile acquiescence of the dark ages to the unlimited freedom of inquiry and the fearless assertion of the right of private judgment, by

which were subjected to understandings of every degree of strength and weakness, disputations more important and sublime than had of old exercised the philosophers of Athens, and baffled the penetration of the acutest geniuses of antiquity. After this, the sleep of the human mind was thoroughly broken. Long established authority held a very precarious sway, if it had neither force nor reason to uphold it; and, if the kings of Europe had not lent their swords in defence of error, the doctrines of the Reformers would have made their way, and would have gained the ascendancy, in countries the most deeply degraded by the yoke of the Church of Rome. Partial, however, as the Reformation was, both in its spirit and in its extent, it has sufficiently evidenced the strength of opinion, when combined with intimate persuasion, urged by the voice of conscience, and diffused by the new facilities which the press afforded; and error and traditional authority have avowed themselves unequal to the contest by taking refuge under the protection of brutal force.

“That spirit which had produced the Reformation and revival of religion was thenceforward easily and naturally extended to other inquiries, and speedily produced a reform in philosophy. The struggle in throwing off the iron bands of superstition gave new vigour to the human faculties, and minds of the old giant breed again appeared among men. The confidence of such minds was equal to their strength; everything

that passed through their hands assumed a new form; and out of the ruins of ancient magnificence they shaped to themselves a new model of creation, more enduring as more deeply grounded in nature." *

* Douglas, "Advancement of Society in Knowledge and Religion."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE STRUGGLES OF THE REFORMED CHURCH FROM THE TIME OF THE REFORMATION TO THE REVOLUTION IN 1688.

It is urged by some that the *autocracy* of the Papacy and the supremacy and centralization of the Church of Rome had an important advantage in preserving *the unity of the Church*. It may justly be demanded, In what consisted this boasted unity?—by what means were the diverse peoples and nationalities for centuries comprehended in the Roman Catholic Church thus united and kept together? The unity, so vaunted, was the result of ecclesiastical tyranny, which, during the long reign of ignorance and superstition, effectually opposed and suppressed all freedom of thought and inquiry; and which upheld, authoritatively, delusion and error. The Church of Rome withheld the Holy Scriptures from the people. “It was,” as one remarks, “an age of authority, not of mental independence; of belief, not of thought or investigation. Dogmas were enforced;—as the text was hid, who could question the interpretation? Men were to believe, not to think; or, if they did think or doubt,

there was at least a supreme or infallible Church to determine." In this way, and by such means, the unity and supremacy of the Church were maintained for many centuries. All was reduced to a dead level of mental submission and of external uniformity. This was, and still is with many, vaunted as the unity of the Church! This great image of Popish idolatry, like that set up by the monarch of Babylon, which all were commanded to worship, is composed of those incohesive and frail materials which are easily shivered and scattered in the day of trial. We have seen the proofs of this in the triumphs of the Reformation.

The civil and religious freedom, vindicated and established by the Reformation, as is the case in all great organic changes, produced, for a long time, great and painful party struggles. Contemporaneously, freedom, whether civil or religious, cannot long exist apart, since they reciprocally influence, fashion, and interpret each other. To appreciate aright the struggles of the various religious parties from the time of the Reformation to the time of the Revolution, it is necessary to know the distinctive opinions of each, and the tendency of those opinions in the direction and character of the workings of that mental freedom which each claimed to exercise, and which occasioned the struggles on which we are now remarking. The leading Reformers, adopting the ancient notion of the *unity* of the Church, and of a *national Churchism*, in appealing to the supreme authority of Holy Scriptures, and in dis-

carding the supremacy and errors of the Church of Rome, showed an anxiety to differ from that Church only on points which were absolutely erroneous, and to retain what was scriptural, or not opposed to Holy Scripture, and therefore non-essential, in the government and discipline of the ancient, discarded Church. They rallied round the Episcopal and National Church. Another class, powerful and influential,—the Puritans,—considering that the leaders of the Reformation had not advanced far enough in their separation from Rome, desired a more thorough and searching reformation: freedom from certain rituals retained; a greater change in matters of discipline; a simpler mode of worship; and the less rigid enforcement of uniformity in matters non-essential, on which the dominant authorities insisted as essential to unity in and with the National Church. From the collision of these two parties there sprang up, after a time, a third party, the aim of which was to establish Independency, or Congregationalism. These asserted the competency of every individual, by the exercise of private judgment in the interpretation of Holy Scriptures, to decide as to his own creed and form of worship. They claimed for each congregation the absolute right of choosing its own minister, of fixing its own mode of worship and discipline, and of managing its own affairs. It is easy to see how, from such varying parties, holding such conflicting views, there would arise those struggles during the reign of the Stuarts which disturbed the unity of the Church, and arrayed

Protestants against Protestants. Though much of this difference and conflict of opinion is to be ascribed to the exercise of the right of private judgment, and an appeal to the supreme authority of Holy Scripture, much of it must also be traced to a *foreign source*—to opinions in matters of ecclesiastical discipline, and other scruples imbibed by some of the leading Reformers in their intercourse with the Reformed Churches of Germany and Switzerland during the Marian persecution.

The great error of the earlier stages of the Reformation and of its leaders consisted in the attempt to enforce on all submission and rigid conformity to the new system of *National Churchism*, and the denial of toleration and liberty to those who entertained conscientious scruples as to the duty of conforming on certain points of ritual and discipline. It is well attested that, up to a later period of these struggles, no difference in opinion on *doctrinal* points existed between the contending parties. The questions which have occasioned the separations, and which now occupy the foreground in the controversy between Churchmen and Dissenters, were as yet unknown and unagitated. Marsden, the historian of the Puritans, remarks :—"With regard to the method of salvation, the nature of the Sacraments, the character of the Christian ministry, and the national establishment of religion, there was no dispute. The controversy, when it had raged for forty years, was still confined to the ceremonial of religion, and to the purity, not of its doctrines, but of its external fabric." A wise

and Christian system of toleration and comprehension at that time, befitting a *national* Church, would, in all probability, have prevented much of that hostility and separation which has so long disturbed the unity of the Church. Instead of this, those in authority admitted of no toleration, and by pains and penalties sought to enforce a strict uniformity as the terms of union with the Church. This system of intolerance and coercion assumed a more rigid and legal form from the passing of the first Act of Uniformity under Elizabeth ; was persevered in during the dynasty of the Stuarts ; reached its culminating point in the passing of the second Act of Uniformity, A.D. 1604, which, in its consequences, prepared the way for the overthrow of the monarchy and the Church.

Queen Elizabeth, on her coming to the throne, had the best of all opportunities of effecting reconciliation and union. The Puritans fondly hoped that, from one who had tasted the bitterness of persecution under Mary, some indulgence would be conceded to the scruples of tender consciences. Her attachment to the Reformation was well known. The religious differences that then existed for the most part had reference to vestments, and a few non-essential points of ritual and discipline. A little timely concession in these minor matters would have restored peace and union. Unhappily, Elizabeth sided with the party who insisted on rigid uniformity, and lost the opportunity, which never occurred again with equal advantage, for securing the

peace of the Church. *The Act of Uniformity* in this reign was passed in *May*, and came into effect on *June 24*, 1559.

The Historian of the Early Puritans' remarks on this Act are as follows:—"It not only enacted a rigorous conformity in the conduct of Divine worship, and in the habits worn by the minister, but further empowered the Queen, by the advice of the Commissioners or the Metropolitans, to ordain and publish at her pleasure further rites and ceremonies, with no other limitation than these words contain:—'As may be most for God's glory, the edifying of his Church, and the reverence of Christ's holy mysteries and Sacraments.' The rigorous pressing of this Act, says the great chronicler of Puritanism, was the occasion of all the mischiefs that befel the Church for above eighty years" (*Neal*). Thus all hope of reconciliation was cut off, and the breach was widened and perpetuated.

On the death of Elizabeth, A.D. 1602, the hopes cherished by the Puritans on the accession of *James I.* were again doomed to disappointment. Brought up a Presbyterian, it was hoped that he would favour further ecclesiastical reforms, or, at least, grant some relief to scrupulous consciences; but it soon became clear that he was decidedly in favour of rigid uniformity, and determined to enforce it. The Hampton Court Conference, called professedly to consider and reconcile the differences between the contending parties, in the manner in which it was conducted, especially on the

part of the King, proved little better than a farce, and an insult to the Puritans. The *Convocation* which followed, A.D. 1604, at which the Constitutions and Canons of the Church were agreed to, and which were soon after published by Royal authority, clearly proved to the Puritans that all hope of concessions to their claims was in vain. The Constitutions and Canons, however, never received the sanction of Parliament, and therefore never became obligatory on the laity. To the Puritan clergy they proved most oppressive and afflictive. A proclamation followed, commanding strict uniformity. "Many of the clergy were silenced; some were imprisoned; their flocks were irritated; the estrangement on both sides was grievously increased; and the lawfulness of separation from the Church of England began at length to be generally discussed. The number of suspended ministers rises or falls in the relation of the partial historians of these times with their prejudices. Some say that 1,500 or more were ejected; others scarcely a tenth part of that number." *

To escape from persecution many of the Puritans, with their pastors, emigrated to North America. Here, in the new world, "the Pilgrim Fathers," and some hundreds who accompanied them, fondly hoped to establish a pure Church, and to enjoy that religious freedom denied them in their own country. The results of this are best related in the words of the historian of the Puritans:—"Revered beyond the Atlantic, as the

* Marsden.

Pilgrim Fathers, the founders of great cities, and of States renowned through the whole world for wealth, intelligence, and liberty, their memory is cherished in England with feelings of silent respect rather than of unmixed admiration. For their inconsistencies were almost equal to their virtues; and here, while we respect their integrity, we are not blinded to their faults. A persecuted band themselves, they soon learned bitterly to persecute each other. The disciples of liberty, they confined its blessings to themselves. The loud champions of the freedom of conscience, they allowed of no freedom which interfered with their narrow views. Professing a mission of Gospel holiness, they fulfilled it but in part. When opposed they were revengeful; when irritated fanatical and cruel. In them a great experiment was to be tried, under conditions the most favourable to its success, and it failed in its most important point. The question to be solved was this. How could the Puritans, the hunted, persecuted Puritans, behave were they but once free, once at liberty to carry their principles into full effect? The answer was returned from the shores of another world. It was distinct and unequivocal. And it was this:—they were prepared to copy the worst vices of their English persecutors, and, untaught by experience, to imitate their worst mistakes. It is a subject on which party writers love to expatiate; but to every Christian mind it is deeply painful. The severities of Whitgift seemed to be justified, when it was made apparent, on

the plains of North America, that they had been inflicted on men who wanted only the opportunity to inflict them again, and to inflict them on each other." *

The decay of religion towards the close of the reign of James was lamentable and wide-spread. The appearance of *Arminianism*, and its rapid progress, gave rise to a new and fierce controversy to increase the troubles and divisions of the Church. The Puritans, and with too much reason, looked upon Arminianism as subversive of the Evangelical doctrines of the Gospel vindicated and established by the Reformation, as Popish in its tendency, and as allied to all that was hostile to civil and religious liberty. The decided patronage and support it met with from *Laud*, who soon after became Archbishop of Canterbury, gave a degree of importance and virulence to this controversy. Laud exerted the great power and influence which his high station gave him to revive in the Church doctrines and rites which the Reformers had rejected as Antichristian and Popish. This at a time, especially in the days of Charles I., when many circumstances led to an apprehension of the revival of the power of Popery, could not fail to produce very general suspicion and alarm. It was not without reason feared that there was a design both on the part of the Court party and of the High Church party for the restoration of Popery. This will excite less surprise when it is remembered that the views of

* Marsden.

the dignified clergy strongly identified them with the maxims of arbitrary power, and the support of those measures of the Court which were hostile to the civil and religious rights of the people. The design of Laud soon became manifest. He laboured to restore ceremonies in the worship of God, which the Reformers had rejected as Popish and idolatrous; to restore images and pictures in the churches. "The Communion-table was transformed into an altar, decorated with costly hangings, and bore its load of massive plate, and the two symbolic candlesticks; and it was again surmounted, as of old, with paintings and stained glass, descriptive of sacred persons or events in ecclesiastical tradition or Church history. It had been the goodly custom of the Church to bow at the name of Jesus; now the worshipper was required to make due and lowly reverence when he entered into the Church; the place on which he stood being, by consecration, made holy ground. It was true, for this neither rule nor rubric could be shown; but, in the absence of all authority, Catholic antiquity was a formula in the hands of the Laudian School, which justified every innovation and silenced every objector. Bowing towards the East was introduced and defended by this sole argument; and, in short, whatever rites were practised in the Church of Rome, and not expressly abolished at the Reformation, nor disclaimed by any doctrine, law, or canon, were held to be consistent with, if not binding upon, the Church of England. As if a thousand

canons could, or ought to have been framed to enumerate and denounce as many superstitious practices; or as if the tone, the general purport, or intention of a statute, were to be studiously concealed when its application and its uses were considered." The severities of the Star Chamber and Court of High Commission to enforce the submission and conformity of the clergy to such ceremonies, and to punish their nonconformity in these things,—the defection of many, mostly of the higher classes, from Protestantism to Popery,—the manifest favour shown by Charles to Popery, and his thinly-veiled designs for its restoration, and the support given to his arbitrary principles of government,—all hastened on that fatal crisis which was consummated in the death of the King and the temporary overthrow of the Monarchy and the Church.

It does not accord with the design of this brief sketch to enter fully into the details of the struggles of the Reformed Church, the particulars of which may be best gathered from the history of those times. The downfall of the Church and the Monarchy was rapidly followed by other startling changes. The property of the Church was sequestrated, and the clergy, deprived of their estates, reduced to poverty and great suffering; the use of the Book of Common Prayer was proscribed; royalty and the peerage were abolished; the churches were defaced, under the pretext of getting rid of every remaining or revived relic of superstition. Episcopacy was abolished, and Presbyterianism was set up in its

place, and soon after Independency took the place of Presbyterianism. A Commonwealth and a Military Despotism, under Cromwell, took the place of the Constitutional Monarch. Fanaticism advanced with fearful strides, and contending sects and parties multiplied with fearful rapidity,—all claiming religious liberty; but as power was gained, persecuting each other. It is not surprising that in this state of anarchy all the friends of order sighed for the restoration of the monarchy and of constitutional government, and especially on the death of Cromwell. The eyes of such were directed to Charles, the rightful heir to the Crown, then in Holland. Negotiations were opened with the exiled Prince, who, in his celebrated declaration from Breda (April 14, 1660), gave those assurances of constitutional government and of religious liberty, which proved satisfactory to the nation. Even the Presbyterians cherished hopes that if Episcopacy was again established, it would be under such modifications that no reasonable Presbyterian could object to. Charles was enthusiastically welcomed back by the nation, and ascended the vacant throne as Charles II. The Monarchy and the Church were restored. The *Savoy Conference* (April, 1661) soon followed. The professed object of this Conference, between the Bishops of the restored Church and some of the leading divines of the Presbyterians, was, by a revision of the Liturgy, Services, and discipline of the Church, to reconcile differences and bring about reli-

gious union. The Conference, from which so much was hoped for, disappointed the expectations of the Presbyterians; and led to more severe measures for enforcing uniformity. "It may appear extraordinary," says one, "that, when comprehension was found impossible, neither party seems to have contemplated toleration. To its principle Charles stood publicly committed by repeated declarations; to its exercise he was secretly inclined by his own Popish predilections; and his assent to the Act of Uniformity was probably facilitated by the prospect it gave of so large a number of Dissenters as should make an Indulgence necessary, from which Roman Catholics could hardly be excluded. But neither Prelatists nor Presbyterians regarded toleration as a religious duty; and the Independents, who were most interested in its recognition, were far from forgetting the result of the Savoy Conference, since a comprehension of Presbyterians under Episcopacy would have left them in so small a minority as to render their own toleration extremely improbable. The various dispositions and movements of all these parties were watched by a Parliament strongly attached to their recovered Church and Constitution, and seeing no security for their permanence but in placing every species of dissent under heavy and equal disabilities." Severe measures soon followed. The *Act of Uniformity* was passed, requiring from all Nonconformist ministers a declaration of "unfeigned assent and consent to all and everything contained in and prescribed by the

Book of Common Prayer," a renunciation of the Solemn League and Covenant, and deprived of their benefices all who had not received Episcopal ordination, from and after St. Bartholomew's Day, 1662. The writer before quoted remarks: "The last-named condition considerably increased the number of those who on this occasion declined conformity,—many persons, like Philip Henry, who had never taken the Covenant, and who entertained no insuperable objections to the Liturgy, being decidedly adverse to discredit and invalidate all their past ministrations, which they believed God to have blessed, by soliciting admission to the *diaconate*. No fewer than two thousand conscientious men resigned their charges, under circumstances of peculiar hardship—the Legislature declining to make any provision for their support, and augmented the bitterness of ejection by selecting the period when tithes were soon to become due, for carrying it into effect. How far these measures were defensible and necessary the day of eternity can alone reveal, when it will probably appear that the cause of Christ was sacrificed between an unreasonable scrupulosity, on the one hand, and an unjustifiable inflexibility, on the other. Certain it is, that on that day the ministerial services of many excellent men were lost to the Church—a loss to which may, in some measure, be ascribed that decay of godliness which the succeeding age lamentably attested. Yet the spectacle of so many prepared to suffer the loss of all things for conscience'

sake would not be without its effect in proving the reality of religion. And though Divine Providence permitted the voices of such men as Manton and Owen, Baxter and Bates, Henry and Howe, to be silenced, their pens have furnished succeeding generations with some of the most useful practical treatises which our country possesses, and which will continue to edify the Church of England so long as any of her sons shall be found sufficiently just and enlightened to believe that instruction in the ways of godliness may be gained from the writings of those who, after a painful struggle, found themselves unable to officiate at her altars, and who believed themselves reduced to the necessity of ultimately quitting her community." *

This severe measure was quickly followed up by others. In the following year the *Conventicle Act* passed, which subjected every one above the age of sixteen who might be present in a house where five persons or more, over and above the inhabitants, met for the purpose of religious worship, to fines and imprisonment. And this in 1665 was followed by the *Five-Mile Act*, which subjected to a fine of 40*l.*, or six months' imprisonment, any Nonconformist minister who might come within five miles of "a corporate town!" Neither might any person, not frequenting the worship of the Church of England, keep school, either privately or publicly, without incurring similar penalties!

Harsh and severe as these measures were, and un-

* Rev. J. A. Baxter, A.M., "Church History."

righteous as they appear to us, they can only be judged of by a reference to the mistaken and intolerant spirit of the times. No one of the religious parties of those days, understood, recognised, or practised those just principles of toleration now happily recognised and practised. All equally proved, when they possessed the power, intolerant of each other. The Episcopalians, in their day of ascendancy, persecuted and ejected the Puritans and Presbyterians; the latter, in their turn, persecuted and ejected the Episcopalians; and then, under like circumstances, the Independents persecuted and ejected the Presbyterians. The intolerance and persecution of each party in the ascendancy was the reaction and retribution of the intolerance of the party whom it had supplanted. Impartiality requires, however justly we deplore even the ejection of so large a number of godly ministers from the Church on the fatal Bartholomew Day, that we should regard even that fatal measure of intolerance as in a great measure the reaction and retribution of the ejection, according to the testimony of some, of an equal number of the Episcopal clergy from the Church by the Presbyterians on the overthrow of the Church and the Monarchy. A one-sided judgment of such cases would be unjust to all parties. The following observations of a Nonconformist writer are too important and just to be here omitted:—"One tyranny was substituted in the place of another. The new system may have contained less of error and more of truth than the old, but it was

sometimes rendered equally repulsive, in being enforced by men who, while professing to discard the Papal doctrine of infallibility, were virtually assuming it. It must, at the same time, be confessed, that this inconsistency, strange as it is, belongs more or less to all the religious parties of the kingdom, from the commencement of the Reformation to the time of the Commonwealth. By slow degrees some men became more enlightened on this point than others ; and even in the worst times all religionists were not capable of proceeding to the same measures of violence in support of their creed. But, reviewing our ecclesiastical history, it would seem that to extort a general acknowledgment of the guilt and inefficacy of persecution, it was necessary that every form of polity which had been animated by intolerance should be allowed to bring upon itself the humiliations and oppressions which it had inflicted upon others. Catholicism, Episcopalianism, and Presbyterianism have each had their season of ascendancy, and all have been persecuting. In the day of their power they were successively admonished to forbear, but they refused to profit by entreaty or rebuke, and they were brought in their turn to the feet of the persecuted. They proclaimed intolerance as a virtue; they practised what they taught; and they had their reward. Violence produced violence; and the parties who resorted to it most were to suffer from it most. It was in this school of no common adversity that those maxims of forbearance were acquired which now

influence the conduct of the secular and spiritual authorities of these kingdoms." *

The reign of Charles II. was one of great oppression to "the godly in the land," of great alarm to Protestants generally, and of great and abounding infidelity and licentiousness. Charles openly favoured Popery, and sought its exaltation. There is every reason to believe he died a Papist, and received in his last moments those consolations which the Church of Rome has the peculiar art of administering to dying profligates. He was succeeded by James II., who made no secret of his being a Papist,—of his determination to restore the influence of the Church of Rome, and of governing the nation on those despotic principles, hateful to the people, and subversive alike of civil and religious liberty. He openly went to mass on the first Sunday after his accession; opened negotiations with the Court of Rome; imposed Popish Presidents upon Christ's Church and Magdalen Colleges at Oxford; and, under the specious pretext of granting liberty of conscience, sought the re-establishment of Popery. A Nuncio from Rome was received and acknowledged; and now might be seen, also, what had not been witnessed since the Reformation, monks traversing the streets of London in the habits of their respective orders. Violent, arbitrary, and unconstitutional measures on the part of James, especially the imprisonment of seven Protestant Bishops in the Tower

* Dr. Vaughan's "Stuart Dynasty."

for refusing compliance with his Popish and despotic schemes, roused the Protestant feelings of the nation to the highest pitch, and brought matters to a crisis. We must here transcribe a page from a writer before quoted :—

“The acquittal of the Bishops,” whom he had placed on their trial, “was a deathblow to James’s projects. The shouts of the army at Hounslow, on learning the result of the trial, must have convinced him that his strongest reliance was but a broken reed, and his mortification must have been complete, when a few days afterwards, on requiring a pledge from officers and men to support him in a repeal of the penal laws, the whole of the regiment first selected for the experiment, with the exception of two captains and a few Roman Catholic soldiers, laid down their arms in token of refusal. Even the birth of an heir, so calculated under other circumstances to inspire hope, served but to generate an extensively entertained scepticism, there being no artifice of which Jesuitism was supposed to be incapable in furtherance of its objects. Protestants of consideration had for some time been urging the Prince of Orange to take decisive steps for the deliverance of their country from the perils with which it was threatened ; and James, before the end of September, learned with consternation that his son-in-law, in obedience to their call, was preparing to land upon his coasts. Too late he sought the advice of those injured Prelates, whose counsels, at an earlier period,

might have averted the catastrophe. Vainly did he attempt to regain his subjects' confidence by retracing his steps in regard to the more obnoxious of his proceedings; reinstating Hough, and the expelled Fellows of Magdalen; removing the Bishop of London's suspension; abolishing the Court of Ecclesiastical Commission; restoring the Charters; and announcing a Parliament to be elected on the old franchise. No one would trust to promises of Constitutional Government which were manifestly extorted by fear; and his escape, when he found his cause hopeless, effected a *revolution*, November, 1688, which has deserved the epithet of *glorious*, not less through its bloodless character, than from its identification with those civil and religious liberties which it secured to every class of Englishmen." *

Thus closed the long struggles of the Reformed Church: thus was secured the blessing of religious toleration, and the Protestant succession of the British Crown.

In closing this sketch of the long-continued struggles of the Reformed Church, it is interesting to inquire, What was the state of religion in the nation during these eventful times? The Puritan movement, which commenced in the days of Elizabeth, began to gain strength under James I., and issued in the Revolution of 1688, has been considered as the second main era

* Baxter's "History of the Church."

of religious awakening and revival in this country. "They know little of mankind," as one remarks, "and of the Church of Christ, who need to be informed that long seasons of worldly prosperity are unfavourable to the soul. It is amidst the tempests of persecution, and in the dark days of trial, that the Church gathers strength. Beneath unclouded sunshine it languishes and faints." During the period we have been reviewing, religion appeared under different phases, and was mixed up with much that was political in character. The transition from Popery to Protestantism, and the struggles to which this gave rise for a pure faith and ritual, will account for the polemical and politico-religious character of the religion of the nation. Hatred of Popery and patriotism were identical in the struggles of that time. As the early Reformers died off, they were succeeded by rulers in the Church of high hierarchical views. Religion suffered decay, and became more formal under James, and under Laud exhibited more of ritualism and pageantry. It is cheering, however, to contemplate, even under these unfavourable circumstances, the growth of real religion and the increase in the numbers of its sincere professors. The zealous and extensive labours, the valuable and numerous writings of the Puritan divines, and their sufferings for conscience' sake, all supply evidence of this. A deep and widely-spread true religious feeling permeated large masses of the people, of which the

history of those times furnish indubitable proof. As the old class of doctrinal Puritans passed off the stage, and a new class of democratic Puritans succeeded, enthusiasm, fanaticism, and hypocrisy began to prevail; but even then there was the manifest growth of pure religion, and a large increase in the numbers of pious ministers and of real Christians. They must indeed be blinded by party prejudice who do not see evidence of this, even during the civil wars and the Commonwealth, in the labours and writings of such men as Manton, Owen, Baxter, and Howe, and many others whose writings and labours were greatly blessed in their days, and are still blessed to the Church in our days. However various the opinions entertained of the character of Cromwell, there are few prepared to question the growth of religion in the army and in the nation under his influence: one, and not the least evidence of this, is seen in his noble Protestant advocacy of the persecuted Vaudois of the valleys of Piedmont, and of the large and liberal collections made, at his bidding, for the relief of this suffering primitive Church and people. Under his government Protestantism and Protestant truth were vigorously and successfully upheld and promoted, amidst all the widely-spread hypocrisy and fanaticism of the day. It is impossible to read the biographies of those times, of the success of Baxter's ministry at Kidderminster, and of others in other places, and not admit in a spirit of thankfulness, that to the Church were vouchsafed, "times of

refreshing from the presence of the Lord." The lamp of truth was kept alive; real religion was spreading through the nation; the spiritual temple of the Lord, in those "troublous times," was rising higher and higher, and extending wider and wider.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TIMES OF REFRESHING DURING THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY—ENGLAND.

THE *Revolution* of 1688 is justly considered "*Glorious*," because it secured to the Church emancipation from continued intolerance ; and, so far as human enactments could do so, secured civil and religious freedom. Hallam remarks :—"The privileges of conscience had no earlier Magna Charta and petition of right whereto they could appeal against encroachment. Civil, indeed, and religious liberty had appeared, not as twin sisters and co-heirs, but rather in jealous and selfish rivalry ; it was in despite of the law, it was through infringement of the constitution, by the Court's connivance, by the dispensing prerogative, by the declarations of indulgence under Charles and James, that some respite had been obtained from the tyranny which those who proclaimed their attachment to civil rights had always exercised against one class of separatists, and frequently against another." "The Act of Toleration was passed with little difficulty, though not without murmurs of the bigoted Churchmen. It

exempts from the penalties of existing statutes against separate conventicles, or absence from the Established worship, such as should take the oath of allegiance, and subscribe the declaration against Popery, and such ministers of separate congregations as should subscribe the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, except three, and a part of a fourth. It gives also an indulgence to Quakers without this condition. Meeting-houses are required to be registered, and are protected from insult by a penalty. We may justly deem this Act a very scanty measure of religious liberty; yet it proved more effectual through the lenient and liberal policy of the eighteenth century; the subscription to articles of faith, which soon became as obnoxious as that to matters of a more indifferent nature, having been practically dispensed with, though such a genuine toleration as Christianity and philosophy alike demand, had no place in our statute-book before the reign of George III.*

Amidst the continued political and religious struggles which preceded the Revolution, and which were in a great measure the effect of them, a great decay of vital religion had taken place in the nation: and this decay, torpor, and irreligion permeated all classes of society. A new school of Theology had sprung up, occupying a middle place between Laudianism on the one hand, and the doctrinal Puritans on the other. "It avoided some of the errors of both parties, to whom, however, it made

* Hallam's "Constitutional History of England," chap. xv.

ample satisfaction by new errors of its own. It did not push ritualism and the benefits of the Sacraments to the extravagant lengths of the Laudians; it avoided two great mistakes, into which many of the Church puritans had gradually fallen, namely, that of ultra-Calvinism, and of a mode of preaching in which moral duties were rather implied than taught. In the new school which now appeared, morality was everything; while its views of Christian doctrines were vague and indistinct. Its teachers were rather Christian philosophers than Christian ministers; they taught morality in connexion with religion; the great verities of Christian doctrine they either did not fully appreciate or fully understand. The Church of England saw in another generation a resolute, and in some respects a successful, attempt (for the contagion spread far and wide, and lasted for a century) to dis sever Christian practice from Christian doctrine; to teach the one and obliterate the other." This was in a great measure the effect and reaction of the Antinomianism and fanaticism which had been so fearfully developed under the Commonwealth, and it continued up to the time of George III. The general laxity in morals, the open licentiousness and infidelity, of such rapid growth and wide spread, in the reign of Charles II., may, in a great degree, be traced to the same time and cause. The ancient bulwarks and landmarks of religious faith and order had been torn up by the hand of violence: the horrors of civil war had tended to brutalize

and unchristianize the mind of the nation ; and between the fierce struggles of religious parties and the intolerance manifested by all, the true spirit and influence of vital religion was checked, and in a great measure lost. As religion decayed, irreligion and infidelity put forth unwonted energies, and spread over the nation. This sad state of religious deterioration and decay was not peculiar or confined to the clergy and members of the Established Church, but was at the same time fearfully manifested among the Nonconformists. "During the reign of Charles II. and his brother," as a Nonconformist writer remarks, "the dread of Popery, and the operation of penal laws, tended to preserve the pureness of the Word and doctrine in the Dissenting Churches ; but when the apprehension of Popish ascendancy was removed by the Act of Settlement, and when the fear of a general persecution was allayed by the Act of Toleration, the calm and tranquillity which followed were characterized by a state of torpor more than equivalent to the previous excitement : and such a state is always favourable to the insinuation and progress of error."

"When the Dissenting ministers were no longer liable to fines, imprisonment, and death, for preaching the Gospel, there were many persons who, from the most unsuitable motives, solicited and obtained the ministerial office, and who feeling no attachment to the doctrines of Christianity, refrained always from enforcing, and often from introducing them into their

sermons; and thus being at first indifferent, they soon became latitudinarian, and then altogether erroneous. The unsuspecting indulgence of some who were truly orthodox, gave an unhappy facility to this introduction of error, while many of the children of the old Dissenters began to sympathize with their contemporary preachers, and thus the Churches gradually assumed a mixed character, without either party acknowledging a necessity of separation. Young men who had been destined to the ministry in early life, and had actually entered upon that office without experiencing a change of heart, fostered the growing evil; and the orthodox and heterodox continued to preach in one pulpit, and to commune at one table. Thus did unconverted ministers introduce those antichristian doctrines, which were not resisted with sufficient zeal even by the truly pious of those days, and which proved so palatable to unconverted trustees, as to induce them to embrace every opportunity of appointing such ministers to the vacant pulpits of the orthodox Church. It was in the form of *Arianism*, however, that error first crept in. Socinianism, broadly and distinctly avowed, could not then have gained admission; but Arianism, by preserving many of the modes of orthodox expression and behaviour, was less shocking to the minds of the pious, and more seductive to the hearts of the unstable; and thus orthodox ministers were willing to accept of colleagues who held the Arian scheme, and orthodox

Church members regarded their Arian fellow-communicants as Christian brethren."

"Had this treacherous calm remained undisturbed, there is reason to fear that the whole (Dissenting) body would have been paralysed beyond recovery; but the premature explosion of Arianism at Exeter was overruled to prevent what otherwise might have been, the silent, unexpected, and total extinction of piety in those Churches. Then the orthodox were roused to a salutary alarm, and began to perceive the folly of their previous indulgence of false doctrine. For a season the progress of error was suspended; but it had gone too far to be repressed by that discountenance which it had received too late. The old Presbyterian Churches, which the orthodox were constrained to abandon, being thus free from all restraint, soon passed from Arianism to Socinianism, and became what we now behold them, the sepulchres of evangelical truth."*

We must here give the testimony of another writer, who, in describing this melancholy period of torpor and decay of religion, says:—"The Revolution was followed, in all the British Churches, by a season of

* "The Manchester Socinian Controversy" (1825). The author of that volume, in a Summary which he gives of chapels occupied by Unitarians in England and Wales, shows that of the 223 places of worship possessed by Unitarians in this island, 178 were *originally orthodox*!!

torpor and decay. The infidel movement, which spread over the Continent in the last century, began early in our own island. Our Tolands, and Wollastons, and Bolingbrokes, were pioneers to the unbelievers and rationalists of France and Germany. A palsy seized on the religious life of Britain, in the reaction from the bitter and furious contests of the previous generation. Instead of a living faith in the Son of God, there was a dry, defensive advocacy of Christianity. The clergy sank very generally into a school of worldly moralists, or as Horsley styled them, apes of Epictetus. In the Scottish Church a lifeless moderatism also prevailed; and while some of the Dissenting Churches lapsed into heresy, the rest languished in contented weakness, and the charge of Christ to preach the Gospel to every creature was almost universally forgotten." *

At this time of fearful decay (the most melancholy development of which prevailed from about the year 1730—1750) it pleased God to visit in mercy the languishing Church of Britain, and to raise up instruments for a glorious revival of true religion. When things were at the lowest and darkest state, the dawn of a brighter day broke upon the slumbering Church, and there came "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord." "Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary." † This great revival of religion, so wide in its extent and so marvellous in its results,

* Birka.

† Pa. lxxviii. 9.

the blessed consequences of which remain to the present day, originated at the beginning of the eighteenth century, as Dr. Buchanan remarked, in Halls and Colleges, with some who early obtained the name of *Methodists*. These young students of Oxford joined together in exercises of devotion, in frequent communion at the Lord's Table, and were remarkable for the strictness and piety of their lives, for which they were ridiculed by Oxonians, at first under the name of "Sacramentarians," "the holy and godly club;" a Fellow of Merton, observing the regular mode in which they divided their time between their devotions and their studies and their rest, said, "Here is a new sect of Methodists sprung up," alluding, probably, to an eminent College of Physicians at Rome who were called "*Methodistæ*," for putting their patients under peculiar regimen. The following account of this little Society will be interesting:—

"John Wesley, a student of Christ Church, being elected Fellow of Merton, seized that opportunity to shake off old companions, who had been a snare to him; and being deeply affected with the prospect of eternity, he new-modelled his life, regulated his studies, and chose his future companions, with a view to his religious improvement;—was ordained in 1725. In his office of tutor he sought to impress the minds of the young men with a deep sense of religion. While this solicitude for the salvation of the soul was yet fresh in Wesley's mind, a serious man, whom he had

travelled many miles to see, said to him, 'Sir, you wish to serve God and go to heaven; remember, you cannot serve Him alone. You must therefore find companions or make them; the Bible knows nothing of solitary religion.' It has been observed that a sentiment boldly conceived, and happily expressed, may overturn an empire. The sentiment so just in itself, and so happy in the delivery, though intended only to benefit an individual, has created not only a religious sect, but several hosts, which have given to the moral world an impulse that has been felt to the antipodes. Mr. Wesley, who was ever alive to first impressions, never afterwards forgot this remark, and immediately on his return to College began to act upon it by communicating his views to his younger brother Charles, who was then a student at Christ Church. They soon after associated themselves with Mr. Morgan and Mr. Kirkham, of Merton College. When the little band first began to meet in the month of November, 1729, they read divinity only on Sunday evenings, and on the other six the Greek and Latin classics; but as they advanced, they became more decidedly a religious party, reading the Greek Testament instead of the heathen writers, and conversing on the most important topics in theology. It soon appeared to them necessary to keep the Fasts of the Church of England, besides their constant abstinence on Wednesdays and Fridays; they received also the Lord's Supper every week, visited the prisoners in the Castle, and the sick

poor in the town. "We were now," says Mr. Wesley, "fifteen in number, and of one heart and of one mind." In the second year, after the formation of this Society, it was joined by several of the pupils of John and Charles Wesley; in two years after by Mr. Ingham of Queen's College, Mr. Broughton of Exeter, and Mr. Hervey, who afterwards became celebrated by his "Meditations." But their grand acquisition was in the year 1734, when *Mr. George Whitfield*, who was then a youth of about nineteen, joined himself to the Society. As he gave himself heartily into the serious views of the Methodists, while his mind was yet unillumined with Evangelical knowledge, he practised such ascetic austerities as reduced him to extreme debility, and which probably would have increased till they had produced melancholy, by shutting himself up from all society—a measure which he deemed necessary for the purification of his nature. But in this state of mind he was relieved by the kind attentions of Mr. Charles Wesley, who recommended him to the society of more experienced Christians, whose conversation, with the judicious application of medicines, healed both body and mind; so that from this time he was seen rejoicing in the glad tidings of salvation by Christ." *

In these small beginnings—ridiculed, despised, and opposed—originated that mighty movement,—the revival of religion in England at the commencement of the last century,—which led to such important moral

* Bogue and Bennett's "History of Dissenters."

transformations throughout England, Wales, Ireland, and America, the influence of which continues to spread at the present time. The most active and zealous instruments in this great movement were clergymen of the Established Church, sincerely attached to her doctrines and discipline, and desirous and resolved to remain in her communion and to promote her interests, and to retain their converts in close connexion and fellowship with her. Beholding and bewailing the low state of religion, and the aboundings of ignorance and irreligion throughout the nation, and moved by an influence from on high and compassion for perishing souls, in their burning zeal for the salvation of souls they soon overstepped the limits of ecclesiastical order and discipline; and, when the churches were closed against them, wherever opportunity offered,—in the open fields and commons, in village church or meeting-house,—unintimidated by opposition, they proclaimed to listening thousands the glad tidings of salvation. Marvellous were the results of their labours among the colliers at Kingswood, the miners of Cornwall, and in Wales, Ireland, and America! Who that contemplates this mighty and wide-spread movement, and the glorious revival of religion as its result, can doubt its being the special work of God's mercy to Britain and the world at large? To enter into the details of the labours of the early Methodists, extending over so wide a field, and of the astonishing success of their ministry, would require a volume of no ordinary size. A short

sketch or two must suffice, and these must be given in the words of others :—

A.D. 1739-40.—“Methodism began now to make rapid progress. Societies were formed, not only in London and Bristol, but in many adjacent places, and some even at a considerable distance. The labourers as yet were few ; but, believing they were engaged in the cause of God against the ignorance and profaneness which overspread the land, they were indefatigable, scarcely giving themselves any rest day or night. The effects of their preaching made much noise, which at length roused some of the sleeping watchmen of Israel, not, indeed, to inquire after the truth and amend their ways, but to crush these irregular proceedings, that they might quietly sleep again. These opponents, however, had more zeal against Methodism than knowledge of it. They attacked it with nothing but idle stories, misrepresentations of facts, and gross falsehoods. They retailed these from the pulpits, and published them from the press, with little regard to moderation, charity, or even decency. This brought more disgrace upon themselves than on the Methodists, who, finding they were assailed only with such kind of weapons, conceived a higher opinion of the cause in which they were engaged, and profited by the attack.”

“That great public attention should be excited by these extraordinary and novel proceedings, and that the dignitaries of the Church and the advocates of stillness and order should take the alarm at them, as ‘doubting

whereunto this thing would grow,' were inevitable consequences. A doctrine so obsolete, that on its revival it was regarded as new and dangerous, was now publicly proclaimed as the doctrine of the Apostles and Reformers; the consciousness of the forgiveness of sins was professed by many, and enforced as the possible attainment of all; several clergymen of talents and learning, which would have given influence to any cause, endued with a mighty zeal and with a restless activity, instead of settling in parishes, were preaching in various churches and private rooms, and to vast multitudes in the open air, alternately in the metropolis and at Bristol, Oxford, and the adjacent places. They alarmed the careless by bringing before them the solemnities of the last judgment; they explained the spirituality of that law upon which the self-righteous trusted for salvation, and convinced them that the justification of man was by the grace of God alone, through faith; and they roused the dozing adherents of mere forms by teaching that true religion implies a change of the whole heart by the Holy Ghost. With equal zeal and earnestness, they checked the pruriency of the Calvinistic system, as held by many Dissenters, by insisting that the law which cannot justify was still the rule of life and the standard of holiness to all true believers; and taught that mere doctrinal views of Evangelical truth, however correct, were quite as vain and unprofitable as pharisaism and formality, when made a substitute for vital faith, spirituality, and prac-

tical holiness. All this zeal was supported and made more noticeable by the moral elevation of their character. Their conduct was scrupulously hallowed; their spirit, gentle, tender, and sympathizing; their courage, bold and undaunted; their patience, proof against all reproach, hardships, persecutions; their charities to the poor abounded to the full extent of all their resources; their labours were wholly gratuitous; and their wonderful activity and endurance of the fatigues of rapid travelling seemed to destroy the distance of place, and to give them a sort of ubiquity in the vast circuit which they had then adopted as the field of their labours. For all these reasons, they were 'men to be wondered at,' even in this the infancy of their career; and as their ardour was increased by the effects which followed, the conversion of great numbers to God, of which the most satisfactory evidence was afforded, it disappointed those who anticipated that their zeal would soon cool, and that, 'shorn of their strength' by opposition, reproach, and exhausting labours, they would become like 'other men.' " *

Though the Wesleys and Whitfield for a time continued to labour in this great work in harmony, yet, about the year 1740, some difference, principally on doctrinal points, arose to separate them, which led to independent action, and ultimately divided the early Methodists into two great parties, known by the names of the leaders, as the *Wesleyans* and *Whitfieldites*.

* "Life of Wesley" (Seeley).

“Controversy between good men,” it has been remarked, “is commonly on some speculative opinion, while they are perfectly at unison on the essential points of religion and the duties of morality.” And thus it was here. For, notwithstanding these differences in doctrinal views, these good men maintained a sincere Christian love to each other, which continued to their dying hour. From this time they carried on the great work to which they had devoted themselves apart from each other, with untiring zeal and astonishing success.

The two great leaders of the whole movement were now fully embarked on their course. Wesley became the founder of a new religious community. Whitfield aspired to nothing beyond the immediate work before him : he preached for the saving of the souls to whom he spake, and he desired no more. The following sketch of the course of Whitfield is from an eloquent pen :—“Wales attracted his notice. It had been preserved from barbarism by the efforts of four of its clergy. One of them, in the reigns of James and Charles I., had been eminent for preaching. Another, Vicar Pritchard, at the same period, had written sacred poems, full of simplicity and Scripture, which had spread widely, among a people fond of music, the knowledge of truth. The third, Griffith Jones, who laboured from 1731 to 1761, had applied the yet more effectual instrument of circulating schools ; teachers prepared by him went from parish to parish, taught the peasantry to

read the Welsh Scriptures and to learn psalmody, and enforced on them, by a simple process of catechising, the truths which Scripture contained. The fourth, who produced a strong impression, and whose course attracted the sympathies of Whitfield, was Howel Harris. Intended for the Church, he had become impatient of the vices and restraints of the University, and had plunged, at the age of twenty-one, into the work of a missionary. Visiting the cottages of the Welsh peasants, addressing them in the fields, he aroused them to religion, and formed them into religious Societies. For four years he had prosecuted his labours, when Whitfield, made aware of his history, entered Wales to encourage and assist him. In the Town-hall of Cardiff, on the horse-block of the inn-yard, under the spreading tree of Pontypool, Whitfield preached to wondering crowds; while Harris, standing by his side, interpreted his discourse in Welsh to the more ignorant of the audience.

“It was not the design of either to withdraw their hearers from the Church. Whitfield’s appeal to the Bishop of Bangor was a proof of this. We cannot, however, wonder at the result. Dissent, which, after the decline of the Nonconformists in the beginning of the eighteenth century, had all but disappeared from Wales, rose again vigorously. Thirty-five chapels, languishing throughout Wales, attested in 1715 the weakness of Dissent; 954 in 1810 proved its progress; and now the number exceeds 1,400.

“But not to England or Wales could the ardour of Whitfield be confined. If the Church of England had lapsed into weakness, the Puritan Churches of America had fallen, by the confession of their own divines, into a yet more general decline. Nor, till Edwards attempted to effect the revival at Northampton, did anything seem to arrest the declension. On Whitfield’s first visit to America, he went to New England, and preached in New York and Boston. He rekindled the interest at Northampton, and visited other places. In 1749, anxious to provide for the Orphan Home in Georgia, he again crossed the Atlantic; and, after organizing his schemes of charity in the Savannah, he traversed the Southern States, swept like a tornado across Philadelphia, and preached in New York and Boston.”

“The progress of no conqueror was ever greeted with greater felicitations; men on horseback poured forth to meet him, and conducted him in triumph into their cities. The Governor received him at his table, took him in his state carriage to the boat, and bade him farewell with embraces; old ministers welcomed him to their pulpits; the churches and chapels were too confined for his auditors, who followed him in thousands to the fields; theatres and concert-rooms were closed during his stay; and money for his Orphan House was poured into his hands. In vain did some of the ministers refuse him their pulpits; the people forced the doors, and bore him into the church; others followed

him to the fields ; and daybreak and nightfall beheld crowds hanging on his words. The impressions produced on the hearers were everywhere the same—interest, anxiety, emotion, arrested and held them ; at times convulsed by agitation, at other times dissolved in tears, sitting often motionless under the spell of the orator ; but never was his power more attested, nor by sign more touching, than when, in Boston, a boy, one of his hearers, taken ill soon after the sermon, died with the words on his lips, ‘ I want to go to Mr. Whitfield’s God ! ’ Tokens of respect and affection greeted him everywhere. Some towns built enormous chapels to receive him. At Philadelphia they offered him 800*l.* a-year if he would spend six months of the year with them. One Governor followed him from place to place in his carriage. Another, aged and comforted, wept before him like a child. Hardened infidels crept in secret to hear him : went doubting, and returned convinced. Physical power, marvellous beyond example, kept pace with this fiery energy ; a tour in America of 800 miles, during which he traversed the worst roads and paths dangerous from their condition, left him at leisure, within two months and a-half, to preach one hundred and seventy-five public sermons, besides holding numberless private exhortations and conversations.”

“ These labours completed, he returned to England, and, after a short stay, passed onward to Scotland. In Edinburgh he was welcomed by the minister of the

Established Church to their pulpits. For weeks he preached twice or thrice daily,—one day seven times. In hospitals, in the Orphan-house Park, on the picturesque and then unoccupied heights of the Calton-hill, to the wise and the simple, to the sick and the strong, to the aged and the child. On all his eloquence wrought the same effects, and fell with equal power. Aged men have recorded, in our lives, the scenes which they remember. Every morning crowds gathered at his house, awakened by the sermons of the day before. Every evening, when he was not preaching, he expounded Scriptures in private to anxious inquirers. All the boldness of his doctrine, all the prejudice felt by a Presbyterian people against an Episcopalian minister, melted away before him; and hardy Scotchmen owned his influence as readily as his southern countrymen. One hundred ministers of the Scotch Church attended his sermons on one visit; and thirty, with the Lord Commissioner in the chair, welcomed him to a public dinner.

“Ireland did not escape the contagion. In Cork, full of Romish bigotry, thousands of Roman Catholics crowded to hear him, and offered, if he would only remain with them, to abandon their priests. The authorities of his own Church admired him. The Primate welcomed him to his table. The Bishop of Derry treated him with kindness; the Bishop of Limerick received him in his house, and threw open the cathedral to his preaching.

"It was vain, indeed, for any religious body to try to draw him into their views, or to narrow within the circle of a party the influence of that genial spirit. This the seceders found, and by this the worthy Erskines were scandalised. They, good men, presented to him the defects of the State Church;—its Erastianism and other sins. They pressed upon him their free Church as the model of what was good. He, indifferent to forms, careless of order, swept like a meteor across the sky, lighting up one sphere, bursting into another, and passing on, burning with heavenly ardour to traverse with utter unconcern the rules and limits of sects. Try to hold him in party bonds, chain him to Presbyterian covenants! he burst them as the horse in the desert snaps the cords, or as the eagle, perched in his mountain eyrie, looks down and loathes the aviary below."*

Such was George Whitfield, a man "full of the Holy Ghost and of power"—a chosen instrument raised up by God to awaken a sleeping Church, to revive and extend religion throughout our land. Gifted with physical and mental power,—with a voice and eloquence beyond most men,—holding, spell-bound, at times listening crowds of ten, of twenty, and often thirty and forty thousand hearers, whose hearts were bowed beneath the power of his message as the trees of the forest before the mighty wind of heaven. Disdaining the prejudices and interests of party or

* Colquhoun's "Sketches."

meaner things, the ardent desire for the salvation of souls became to him the one and ruling passion. He moved as in a celestial orbit, and was seen, like the Angel of the Apocalypse, "flying in the midst of the heavens, having the everlasting Gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people; saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him, and worship Him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters!"* The Wesleys and their coadjutors were not behind in zeal or labours, or success, through the three kingdoms. "The labours of Mr. Wesley in the work of the ministry," as stated by one of his biographers, "for fifty years together, were without precedent. During this period he travelled about 4,500 miles every year, one with another, chiefly on horseback. It had been impossible for him to accomplish this almost incredible degree of exertion without great punctuality and care in the management of his time. He had stated hours for every purpose; and his only relaxation was change of employment. His rules were, like the laws of the Medes and Persians, absolute and irrevocable. He had a peculiar pleasure in reading and study, and every literary man knows how apt this passion is to make him encroach on the time which ought to be employed in other duties. He had a high relish for conversation, especially with pious, learned, and sensible men; but whenever the

* Rev. xiv. 6, 7.

hour came when he was to set out on a journey he instantly quitted the company with which he might be engaged without any apparent reluctance. For fifty-two years or upwards he generally delivered two, frequently three or four, sermons in a day, and allowing, as a writer of his life has done, fifty annually for extraordinary occasions, the whole number of sermons he preached during this period will be 42,560. To these must be added an infinite number of exhortations to the Societies after preaching, and in other occasional Meetings at which he assisted." "Some years before his death the number of members of the Societies he had formed, and of which he was considered the spiritual father, amounted to 35,000, besides regular hearers, which were not enumerated."

"These preachers," says Isaac Taylor, speaking of Wesley and Whitfield, "whose eye sparkled with a fiery energy, and whose hand in every movement seemed to have no aim, as if at a single bosom, spoke to the soul of every hearer, apart from the thousands around him,—'My message is to thee, sinner! I stand here to-day to bring thee to bethink thyself of thy past ways. Thou, who dost now appear in the presence of thy God, loathsome in thy sins, I challenge thee, I command thee to bow thy stubborn neck and to bend thy knee. Dost not thou, even thou, ungrateful as thou hast been these many years,—yea, a hardened rebel from thy mother's breast until now,—dost thou not hear the Saviour calling thee to repent and turn?"

Was it not for thee He shed his blood? Did He not carry thy sorrows to Calvary—even thine? Was He not wounded for thy transgressions? Did He not think of thee, of thy soul, and of all its abominations, that dark night when He lay in agony on the ground? Yes, it was none other than thy sins that made him sweat blood in that garden. But now with a purpose of mercy in his heart towards thy wretched soul, He calls thee to himself and says,—yes, He says it to thee,—“Come now, and let us reason together!” It was thus, and often in phrases far more emphatic and awakening, that a firm hold on the human heart was taken, and that a commencement was made of that life divine, of that converse of the soul with the Shepherd of souls, to which it is the purport and end of the Christian dispensation to give effect.” Can it then excite surprise that the effect of such preaching everywhere was to awaken a vast and wide-spread religious feeling in England, and that tens of thousands were called from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God?

It would, however, be incorrect to confine this astonishing revival of religion in England to the labours of the Wesleys, Whitfield, and their coadjutors. The reviving influence of religion, like the genial influence of the spring, was not confined to any particular sphere, but was manifested, at that time, in connexions and places widely distant, and separated from each other. For the most part these eminent men, the

Wesleys and Whitfield, and some others actively engaged with them, were ministers of the Established Church, and devoted their labours chiefly to a revival of true religion in the Church to which they were attached, and whose doctrines they held and preached. Separation from the Church, so far from forming any part of their plan, was deprecated by them. It has been usual to attribute the great revival of religion in this kingdom to these men alone; but this is far from being correct. There were other eminent clergymen, and also Nonconformist ministers in various parts of England and Wales, whose labours were eminently blessed of God in effecting this revival. Among these may be named Venn, Conyers, Grimshaw, Romaine, Talbot, Walker, and others. The labours of these devoted men were honoured of God in the revival of pure religion, not only in the connexions over which they presided, and in their respective localities, but extensively among the clergy. The case of Mr. Venn, whose labours were so extensively blessed in this way, is thus stated by his biographer:—

“This change of his sentiments was not to be ascribed to an intercourse with others; it was the steady progress of his mind in consequence of a faithful and diligent application to the Holy Scriptures, unbiassed by an attachment to human systems. It was not till some years afterwards that he became acquainted with any of those preachers who are usually known by the name of Evangelical, though his own views now

agreed with theirs, and were strictly, and in a proper sense, Evangelical; that is, in conformity with the motives and hopes held out to us in the Gospel of Christ.

“Here, let it be observed, is the case of a minister of the Church engaged in the discharge of his office, whose mind is thus led to the full and cordial reception of these sentiments, by the blessing of God on prayer and the study of the Bible. He next discovered that the Articles and Liturgy of the Church fully agreed with the more enlightened and elevated tone of his own newly-adopted views, and became more than ever attached to her constitution and services, and laboured with more abundant zeal and success in the various offices which were assigned to him as one of her ministers. In the West Riding of Yorkshire he was the means of exciting the zeal of many active friends of the Church, and of bringing several ministers, like-minded with himself, into that neighbourhood. Upon his removal to the vicinity of Cambridge his influence was exerted upon many of the students with signal effect, who came forward from year to year to consecrate their services to the same cause in which he was labouring. From this brief sketch it is easy to perceive how greatly the character and influence of Mr. Venn tended to the revival of vital religion in the Established Church.” What is here said of Venn will equally apply to the other excellent clergymen already named.

“The six clergymen (Venn, Grimshaw, Romaine, Talbot, Walker, Conyers), whom I have now mentioned, were all led into similar views within about ten years after the time from which Mr. Wesley dates the final adoption of his own religious sentiments. I have not included the name of James Hervey, of Weston Flavel, because his mind was directly influenced by intercourse with Mr. Charles Wesley. But I think I have stated enough to prove that there was a body of Evangelical labourers who were independent of the Methodists, and nearly contemporaneous with them, and whose labours had an immediate and remarkable influence upon the clergy of the Church of England.

“After this period the list might be considerably augmented. Amongst the names of early and frequent occurrence would be Jones (of St. Saviour’s, Southwark), Burnett (of Elland, one of the early friends of Walker of Truro), Powley, two Stillingfleets, Fletcher, Berridge, Maddock, Newton, Joseph Milner, Ryland, Robinson, Scott, Simeon, &c., &c.

“Some idea of the rapid increase which took place in the numbers of the Evangelical clergy may be formed from the fact, which has been recorded, that when Mr. Romaine first began his course he could only reckon up as many as six or seven who were like-minded with himself; in a few years the number was increased to tens; and before he died (1795) there were above 500, whom he regarded as fellow-labourers with himself in word and doctrine. At what rate the

increase has proceeded since that time I will not take upon myself to say; but assuredly it has been such as to fill the heart of every intelligent observer with praise and gratitude to God.

“The conclusion to which I think we are led, by a review of the whole case, is this: that when it pleased God, in a day of extreme darkness, to ‘cast his bright beams of light upon the Church’—according to the beautiful prayer of our Liturgy—He kindled in the minds of many ministers of the Church, in various places and under various circumstances, a revival of genuine and primitive Christianity. By their efforts, and the large measure of success vouchsafed unto them, and by the continual accession of fresh labourers, who, no less than the first promoters of the revival, had received their views of the truth, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, from the independent study of the Word of God and prayer, the work was carried on to the glorious extent it has reached at the present day. The Methodists and the Evangelical clergy were the chief instruments employed in this work; and these two bodies of labourers had a mutual and important influence upon each other. But as far as we can trace the operation of human agency it seems to me that the effects of the labours of the Wesleys and their immediate coadjutors were chiefly manifest in the extension of Methodism;—as the effect of the labours of the Evangelical clergy were in the improved tone of religion in the Established Church; that there were thus two

kindred, but separate and independent, streams of light penetrating the gloom which brooded over the Christian community. That which flowed in the channel of Methodism burst forth, indeed, in a more resplendent and sudden blaze; the other proceeded by a more gradual and quiet, but progressive, course." *

Thus in mercy were granted to the Church, "*times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.*"

* Preface to "Venn's Life."

CHAPTER XIX.

TIMES OF REFRESHING DURING THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY,
continued—AMERICA.

THE sovereignty of God is as remarkable in the *moral* as in the *natural* world, in the bestowment of the blessings of his grace as in the gifts of his providence,—“dividing to every one severally as He will.”* Thus spake God by the prophet to his people of ancient times:—“I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not, withered.”† This may often be remarked in God’s bestowments of the gracious influences of his Holy Spirit for the revival and spread of true religion. Some places and people are thus visited and blessed, while others remain unvisited and unblessed. There are reasons for this, often inscrutable to us; but there are also reasons for it, sufficiently manifest to admonish and encourage us. The Divine promise is clear and certain,—“I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring; and they shall spring up

* 1 Cor. xii. 11.

† Amos iv. 7.

as among the grass, as willows by the watercourses. One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." * These beautiful and figurative terms express what is meant by a revival of religion: it is the effect of an outpouring of God's Holy Spirit manifesting itself in the rapid increase of the numbers and piety of those whose hearts are converted to God and his service, and who become the means of spreading true religion in the world. "The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened," and it is as true now as it ever was: "Our heavenly Father will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." We may, therefore, be sure that where the blessing is withheld from a Church or from individuals there is that in their moral condition to account for it. On the contrary, where the need of this blessing is felt, where it is "thirsted" for, where God's promise of it is really believed, and its bestowal is sought by earnest and importunate faith and prayer, it will not be long withheld. This earnest and importunate faith and prayer, it will generally be found, have *preceded* every remarkable revival of religion. Did this more prevail we should then have every reason to expect that the Christian Church would more extensively be visited with "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord."

It is also to be remarked, in reference to the great

* Isa. xliv. 3, 4, 5.

revival of religion which took place early in the last century, that it occurred both in the Old and New World,—in England and America,—about the same time ; showing, in both cases, that it was the special work of God ; the result of a glorious outpouring of his Holy Spirit, awakening and preparing the Church for better days, and for the fulfilment of her great mission of enlightening and evangelizing the world.

In attempting a sketch of this great religious movement in America it is important to notice *where* it first commenced. Its first manifestation was in those parts of America where the “Pilgrim Fathers,” seeking an asylum from persecution, had first planted the Christian Church in New England, and originated on a religious foundation that Society which proved the germ of these mighty States, so rapidly spreading over the vast American continent. The remarks of an American divine on this are too important to be omitted here :—
“The Pilgrim Fathers are not to be judged by common rules ; they were above the common order, as if born and trained for more than common purposes,—which indeed was the fact. God raised them up for the special exigency which they occupied and filled out,—to lay the foundation of a new social edifice, to assort and throw into form the elements of a new empire. And the religious care and faith with which they undertook and carried on and achieved their work have been alike a subject of ridicule among the profane, and of

approving admiration among those who know how to appreciate their character. And they did actually erect not only a civil, but a religious empire. The spirit of religion was infused throughout, pervaded, and characterised all their institutions. By consequence, that structure of society, framed by these men, having retained its original stamp and the same grand features, has always proved favourable to the operation of religious influence. There has always been a religious pulse in the community that could be found and easily susceptible of being quickened by the application of the proper means. It is remarkable that revivals of religion, under their American character, commenced in New England, and were, till quite recently, principally confined to that region. And their extension westward and southward I believe has generally been found in the tract of New England emigrants, or springing up under the labours of New England ministers. Such facts may be presumed to have a connexion with the original elements and peculiar frame of society, as also with the blessing of God in reward of the distinguished Christian virtues of the founders of such institutions, and of the fidelity of successive generations, in supporting them in their original spirit. It is a general and an exact truth, that the Pilgrim Fathers of New England laid the foundation of their civil and social edifice, and of their religious institutions, in tears, and prayers, and in much faith. *And the experiment of two hundred*

years has proved that God has regarded those tears, and remembered those prayers, and plenteously rewarded those works of faith." *

The great revival of religion in America commenced under the ministry of the eminent Rev. Jonathan Edwards, at Northampton, Mass., afterwards President of Nassau Hall, Princeton, New Jersey, and began to attract public attention in 1733. An interesting account of this from the pen of the Rev. Jonathan Edwards, published in this country, will enable us to form some estimate of the character and extent of this religious movement. Speaking of the work at Northampton, he writes :—

"A great and earnest concern about the great things of religion and the eternal world, became *universal* in all parts of the town, and among persons of all degrees and all ages; the noise amongst the dry bones waxed louder and louder; all other talk but about spiritual and eternal things was soon thrown by; all the conversation in all companies and upon all occasions was upon these things only, unless so much as was necessary for people carrying on their ordinary secular business. The minds of people were wonderfully taken off from the *world*,—it was treated amongst us as a thing of very little consequence; they seemed to follow their worldly business more as a part of their duty than from any disposition they had to it; the *temptation* now

* "History of American Revivals," by the Rev. Calvin Colton.

seemed to lie on that hand to neglect worldly affairs too much, and to spend too much time in the immediate exercise of religion, which thing was exceedingly misrepresented by reports that were spread in distant parts of the land, as though the people here had wholly thrown by all worldly business, and betook themselves entirely to reading and praying and such like religious exercises. There was scarcely a single person in the town, old or young, that was left unconcerned about the great things of the eternal world. Those that were wont to be the vainest and loosest, and those that had been most disposed to think and speak slightly of vital and experimental religion, were now generally subject to great awakenings. And the work of conversion was carried on in a most astonishing manner, and increased more and more ; souls did, as it were, come by flocks to Jesus Christ. From day to day, for many months together, might be seen evident instances of sinners brought out of darkness into marvellous light, and delivered out of an horrible pit, and from the miry clay, and set upon a rock with a new song of praise to God in their mouths.

“This work of God, as it was carried on, soon made a glorious alteration in the town, so that in the spring and summer following (1735) the town seemed to be full of the presence of God ; it never was so full of *love* nor so full of *joy*, and yet so full of distress, as it was then. There were remarkable tokens of God’s presence in almost every house. It was a time of joy in families

on the account of salvation being brought unto them ; parents rejoicing over their children as new-born, and husbands over their wives, and wives over their husbands. The *goings of God* were then *seen in his sanctuary*—God's day was a *delight*, and his tabernacles were amiable. Our public assemblies were then beautiful ; the congregation was alive in God's service, every one earnestly intent on the public worship, every hearer eager to drink in the words of the minister as they came from his mouth ; the assembly in general were from time to time in tears while the Word was preached ; some weeping with sorrow and distress, others with joy and love, others with pity and concern for the souls of their neighbours." *

This revival extended to the towns and places around, and spread in the provinces of New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Connecticut ; and for several years, from 1730 to 1750, continued to extend, with like glorious results, over the principal settlements of New England, in New Jersey, and Long Island. A deep and abiding religious feeling was most widely awakened, and its result was manifested in the holy lives of thousands who were added to the Church.

"In the meantime," remarks Mr. Colton, "George Whitfield lighted down on these regions as an angel of God. And he was welcomed as an angel of God, while he delivered the message of God to the many thousands who constantly flocked in his train and crowded around

* "Narrative" by Rev. Jonathan Edwards (Nov. 6, 1736).

his pulpit. Whitfield was an eminent instrument in the hand of God of rousing and augmenting the religious sensibilities of that wide and growing community, and of giving an impulse to revivals of religion, which is not yet spent, and I trust never will be. He came at a time when the way was prepared for him, and he had nothing to do but to pour forth the overwhelming torrents of his eloquence, and a blessing attended him wherever he went, as is sufficiently known."

We shall best estimate the character of this great religious movement from the following statement of one who witnessed it at the time, and who bears witness to the doctrines preached by Mr. Whitfield and the astonishing results of his ministry. In an account of the revival which took place at Boston and its neighbourhood the Rev. Mr. Prince writes:—

"From the year 1738 we had received accounts of the Rev. Mr. Whitfield as a very pious young minister of the Church of England, rising up in the spirit of the Reformers, and preaching their doctrines first in England and then in America with surprising power and success, which raised desires in great numbers among us to see and hear him. And having received invitations to come hither, he, from Georgia and South Carolina, arrived at Rhode Island on the Lord's-day, September 14, 1740, and the Thursday morning after came to Boston. Next day Dr. Sewall and I made him a visit, found several ministers and other gentle-

men of the town with him, and that Dr. Colman and Mr. Cooper had engaged him to preach this afternoon in their house of public worship ; and in about an hour we went to the place, which was quickly crowded with two or three thousand people. He begun with a short and fervent prayer ; and, after singing, took his text from John xvii. 2,—gave a plain, weighty, regular discourse, representing that all our learning and morality will never save us ; and without an experimental knowledge of God in Christ we must perish in hell for ever. He spoke as became the oracles of God, in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, and especially when he came to his application, he addressed himself to the audience in such a tender, earnest, and moving manner, exciting us to come and be acquainted with the dear Redeemer, as melted the assembly into tears.

“ Next morning, at Dr. Sewall’s and my desire, he preached at the South Church to further acceptance. He spoke with a mighty sense of God, eternity, the immortality and preciousness of the souls of his hearers, of their original corruption, and of the extreme danger the unregenerate are in ; with the nature and absolute necessity of regeneration by the Holy Ghost ; and of believing in Christ in order to our pardon, justification, yielding an acceptable obedience, and obtaining salvation from hell and an entrance into heaven. His doctrine was plainly that of the Reformers ; declaring against putting our good works of morality in the

room of Christ's righteousness, or their having any hand in our justification, or being indeed pleasing to God while we are totally unsanctified, acting from corrupt principles and unreconciled enemies to him ; which occasioned some to mistake him, as if he opposed morality. But he insisted on it, that the tree of the heart is by original sin exceedingly corrupted, and must be made good by regeneration, that so the fruits proceeding from it may be good likewise ; that where the heart is renewed, it ought and will be careful to maintain good works ; that if any be not habitually so careful, who think themselves renewed, they deceive their own souls ; and even the most improved in holiness, as well as others, must entirely depend on the righteousness of Christ for the acceptance of their persons and services. And though now and then he dropped some expressions that were not so accurate and guarded as we should expect from aged and long-studied ministers, yet I had the satisfaction to observe his readiness with great modesty and thankfulness to receive correction as soon as offered. In short, he was a most importunate wooer of souls to come to Christ for the enjoyment of Him and all his benefits. He distinctly applied his exhortations to the elderly people, the middle-aged, the young, the Indians and negroes ; and had a most winning way of addressing them. He affectionately prayed for our magistrates, ministers, colleges, candidates for the ministry, and churches, as well as people in general ; and before he left us,

he, in a public and moving manner, observed to the people how sorry he was to hear that the religious assemblies, especially on lectures, had been so thin; exhorted them earnestly to a more general attendance on our public ministrations for the time to come, and told them how glad he should be to hear of the same.

“Multitudes were greatly affected, and many awakened with his lively ministry. Though he preached every day, the houses were exceedingly crowded; but when he preached on the common, a vaster number attended; and almost every evening the house where he lodged was thronged to hear his prayers and counsels. Upon invitation he also preached in several neighbouring towns, travelled and preached as far as York, about seventy miles north-east of Boston, returned hither, gave us his farewell affectionate sermon on the Lord’s-day evening, October 12; next morning left us, travelled westward to Northampton, thence through Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey to Philadelphia, and thence sailed to South Carolina.”

“ . . . As to Mr. Whitfield’s preaching, it was, in the *manner*, moving, earnest, winning, melting; but the mechanical influence of this, according to the usual operations of mechanical powers, ceased in two or three hours; and I believe with the most as soon as the sound was over, or they got out of the house, or in the first conversation they fell into. But with the manner of his preaching, wherein he appeared to be in earnest, he

delivered those vital truths which animated all our martyrs, made them triumph in flames, and led his hearers into the views of that vital, inward, active piety which is the effect of the mighty and supernatural operation of a Divine power on the souls of men; which only will support and carry through the sharpest trials, and make meet for the inheritance of the Saints in light. His chief and earnest desires and labours appeared to be the same with the Apostle Paul for the Saints at Ephesus,—that they might know (by experience) what is the exceeding greatness of his power (*i.e.*, the power of God) to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead. (Eph. i.) And they were these things, and this sort of preaching with surprising energy, that the Holy Spirit was pleased to use as means to make many sensible they knew nothing of these mighty operations, nor of these vital principles, within them; but that with Simon Magus, who was a visible believer and professor of Christ and his religion, they were in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity, *i.e.*, in the state, pollution, guilt, and power of sin, which is inexpressibly more disagreeable to the holy God, than the most bitter gall to men, and will be bitterness to them, without a mighty change, in the latter end. It was by such means as these, the Holy Spirit seized and awakened the consciences of many; and when the mechanical influence on the animal passions ceased, still continued

these convictions, not only for many days, but weeks and months after the sound was over ; yea, to this very day with some ; while they excited others to an earnest and persevering application to Jesus for his Spirit to quicken them, till they came to an hopeful perception of his quickening influence in them ; and while in others the Sovereign and offended Spirit leaving off to strive, these convictions in their consciences, the efforts thereof, have either sooner or later died away." *

A similar revival of religion took place about the same time among the *Indians*—the aborigines of America. When the American Continent was discovered, and at the time of its first colonization from Great Britain, it was in the occupation of various tribes of Indians who were gradually wasting away, and reduced to great misery by their miserable way of living ; their dreadful wars with each other, and the prevalence of epidemic diseases. As the colonization of the country went on, the native Indians retired back, northward and westward, and wars with the colonists, and vices introduced by the Europeans, greatly decreased their numbers. The heathen darkness and miserable condition of these aborigines early excited the compassion of Christians. In some of the early charters of incorporation, granted to the colonists by the British Government, special provision was made for the religious instruction and civilization of the Indians. Christian Missions and missionaries were

* " Historical Collections," by Rev. J. Gillies, D.D.

established among them. In the seventeenth century, the labours of the apostolic Elliott and the Mayhews had been attended with considerable success. It was, however, under the patient, persevering, and self-denying labours of the devout *Brainerd*, the great revival of religion among the Indians took place early in the eighteenth century. This devoted missionary commenced his labours among them in the year 1743, submitting to great privations and sufferings. Some idea may be formed of this from the following extract from a letter he addressed to his brother. It is dated from *Kaunaumeeck*, where he passed his first year of labour :—

“ *Kaunaumeeck, April 30, 1743.*

. . . . “ I live in the most lonely, melancholy desert, about eighteen miles from Albany; for it was not thought best that I should go to Delaware River, as I believe I hinted to you in a letter from New York. I board with a poor Scotchman: his wife can talk scarcely any English. My diet consists mostly of hasty-pudding, boiled corn, and bread baked in the ashes, and sometimes a little meat and butter. My lodging is a little heap of straw, laid upon some boards, a little way from the ground; for it is a log room, without any floor, that I lodge in. My work is exceeding hard and difficult; I travel on foot a mile and a-half in the worst of roads almost daily, and back again; for I live so far from my Indians. I have not seen an English person this month. The

Lord grant that I may learn to 'endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ!'

"As to my success here I cannot say much as yet. The Indians seem generally kind and well disposed towards me, and are mostly very attentive to my instructions, and seem willing to be taught. Two or three, I hope, are under some convictions; but there seems to be little of the special workings of the Divine Spirit among them yet, which gives me many a heart-sinking hour. Sometimes I hope God has abundant blessings in store for them and me; at other times I am overwhelmed with distress, that I cannot see how *his* dealings with me are consistent with covenant love and faithfulness, &c.; but I already see that I needed all this chastisement. 'It is good for me' that I have endured these trials, and have hitherto little or no apparent success."

On the close of his first year, during which he endured great hardships and met with comparatively small success, he was removed to another tribe of Indians at the Forks of the Delaware; this, indeed, was his original destination. Crossing Hudson's River he traversed woods to the Delaware, about 100 miles through a desolate country, enduring great hardships, reaching *Sakhawotung*, where he commenced a new missionary station. "Here," writing some months afterwards, he says,—“when I came to the Indians, I saluted their king and others in the manner that I thought most engaging; and soon after informed the

king of my desire to instruct them in the Christian religion. After he had consulted two or three old men, he told me he was willing to hear. I then preached to those few that were present, who appeared very attentive and well-disposed ; and the king in particular seemed both to wonder and be well-pleased with what I taught them respecting the Divine Being, &c. ; and since that time he has ever shown himself friendly to me, giving me free liberty to preach in his house whenever I think fit. Here, therefore, I have spent the greater part of the summer, preaching usually in the king's house."

The results of his labours here he thus states:—"The number of Indians in this place is but small; most of them that formerly lived here are dispersed and removed to places farther back in the country. There are not more than ten houses hereabouts that continue to be inhabited ; and some of these are several miles distant from others, which makes it difficult for the Indians to meet together so frequently as could be desired. When I first began to preach here, the number of my hearers was very small, often not exceeding twenty-five persons ; but afterward their number increased, so that I have frequently had forty persons or more at once ; and oftentimes the most of those belonging to these parts came together to hear me preach. The effects which the truths of God's Word have had upon some of the Indians in this place are somewhat encouraging. Sundry of them are brought to renounce

idolatry, and to decline partaking of those feasts which they used to offer in sacrifice to certain supposed unknown powers. And some few among them have, for a considerable time, manifested a religious concern for their souls' eternal welfare, and still continue to inquire the way to Zion, with such diligence and becoming solicitude, as gives me reason to hope that God, who, I trust, has begun this good work in them, will carry it on until it shall issue in their saving conversion to Himself. These not only detest their old idolatrous notions, but strive also to bring their friends off from them. And, as they are seeking salvation for their own souls, so they seem desirous, and some of them take pains, that others may be excited to do the like."

The third year of Brainerd's missionary labours commenced at a new station, among the Indians at the *Susquehanna*. These were a mixed company of many tribes, speaking many languages. Among these it was that the remarkable revival of religion to which we have referred soon manifested itself, to rejoice the heart of the faithful missionary, as evidently "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord." A few extracts from Brainerd's journal, drawn up by the desire of the Society in Scotland for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, and published under the title of "*Mirabilia Dei inter Indicos*," will show the rise and progress of this great religious work.

His first entrance among the Indians at *Crosweek*-

sung, where his labours were so remarkably blessed, was in June, 1745, and is thus noticed by himself :—

“ Having spent most of my time for more than a year past amongst the Indians in the Forks of Delaware in Pennsylvania, and having, in that time, made two journeys to Susquehanna River, far back in that province, in order to treat with the Indians respecting Christianity, and not having had any appearance of special success in either of those places, which damped my spirits, and was not a little discouraging to me; upon hearing that there were a number of Indians at Crossweeksung, in New Jersey, near fourscore miles south-east from the Forks of Delaware, I determined to make them a visit, and see what might be done towards their conversion.” He found the Indians here, at first few in number and greatly scattered, but favourably disposed to listen to the Gospel. Some who heard the Word soon went forth and gathered together their scattered brethren to hear the missionary, who entreated that the glad tidings might be preached also to them. In this way, in a short time, considerable numbers of the Indians were collected at Crossweeksung. In a short time, delightful evidence was afforded of the special blessing of God upon his labours. Thus he writes :—

“ *August 7.*—I stood amazed at the influence that seized the audience almost universally, and could compare it to nothing more aptly than the irresistible force

of a mighty torrent, or swelling deluge, which, with its insupportable weight and pressure, bears down and sweeps before it whatever is in its way. Almost all persons, of all ages, were bowed down with concern together; and scarcely one was able to withstand the power of this surprising operation. Old men and women, who had been drunken wretches for many years, and some little children, appeared in distress for their souls, as well as persons of middle age. And it was apparent that these children (some of them at least) were not merely frightened with seeing the general concern, but were made sensible of their danger, the badness of their hearts, and their misery without Christ, as some of them expressed it. The most stubborn hearts were now obliged to bow. A principal man among the Indians, who before was most secure and self-righteous, and thought his state good because he knew more than the generality of the Indians had formerly done, and who, with a great degree of confidence, only the day before, told me he had been a Christian more than ten years, was now brought under solemn concern for his soul, and wept bitterly. Another man, considerably in years, who had been a murderer, a powan (or conjuror), and a notorious drunkard, was likewise now brought to cry for mercy with many tears, and to complain much that he could be no more concerned when he saw his danger so very great.

“They were almost universally praying and crying for mercy in every part of the house, and many out of

doors ; and numbers could neither go nor stand. Their concern was so great, each one for himself, that none seemed to take any notice of those about them ; but each prayed as freely for themselves, and, I am apt to think, were, to their own apprehension, as much retired, as if they had been every one by themselves in the thickest desert ; or I believe, rather, that they thought nothing about any but themselves, and their own states ; and so were ‘ every one praying apart,’ although all together. It seemed to me there was now an exact fulfilment of that prophecy, Zech. xii. 10—12.”

“This concern, in general, was most rational and just. Those who had been awakened any considerable time complained more especially of the badness of their hearts ; and those newly awakened, of the badness of their lives and actions past ; and all were afraid of the anger of God, and of everlasting misery as the desert of sin.”

“Those who had lately obtained relief were filled with comfort at this season. They appeared calm and composed, and seemed to rejoice in Christ Jesus ; and some of them took their distressed friends by the hand, telling them of the goodness of Christ, and the comfort that is to be enjoyed in Him, and invited them to come and give up their hearts to Him ; and I could observe some of them, in the most honest and unaffected manner (without any design of being taken notice of), lifting up their eyes to heaven, as if crying for mercy, while they saw the distress of the poor souls around them.

“This was indeed a surprising day of God’s power, and seemed enough to convince an atheist of the truth, importance, and power of God’s Word.”

This remarkable religious awakening among the Indians continued to spread and prevail for many months. The results of it are thus stated by Brainerd:—

“Their pagan notions and idolatrous practices seem to be entirely abandoned in these parts. They are regulated and appear regularly disposed in the affairs of marriage. They seem generally divorced from drunkenness—their darling vice, and the sin that easily besets them; so that I do not know of more than two or three who have been my steady hearers that have drunk to excess since I first visited them, although before it was common for some or other of them to be drunk almost every day; and some of them seem now to fear this sin in particular more than death itself. A principle of honour and justice appears in many of them; and they seem concerned to discharge their old debts, which they have neglected, and perhaps scarce thought of, for years past. Their manner of living is much more decent and comfortable than formerly, having now the benefit of that money which they used to consume upon strong drink. Love seems to reign among them, especially those who have given evidence of having passed a saving change; and I never saw any appearance of bitterness or censoriousness in these, nor any disposition to esteem themselves better than others who

had not received the like mercy. And now, on the whole, I think I may justly say, here are all the evidences of a remarkable work of grace among these Indians that can reasonably be desired or looked for. May the great Author of this work maintain and promote the same here, and propagate it everywhere, till the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen !”

On these extraordinary revivals of religion, the blessed effects of which continue to the present day, a few remarks are necessary. The history of the early Christian Church under the ministry of the Apostles records several great religious movements of a similar character. The great awakening on the day of Pentecost and shortly after, under the powerful preaching of the Apostle Peter, when thousands were converted, and among them a great company of the priests, are instances of this. Such great religious revivals marked and facilitated the early and rapid spread of Christianity. There are few to be found to deny that such religious awakenings was the special work of the Spirit of God giving effect to the labours of his faithful servants. An inspired Apostle fully recognises this when he thus addressed his converts:—“Our Gospel came not unto you *in word only*, but also *in power*, and *in the Holy Ghost*, and in much assurance;” * and again:—“My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power.” † And why should not

* 1 Thess. i. 5.

† 1 Cor. ii. 4.

the same Divine agency be acknowledged in those great religious movements which have passed under our review? The agency of man, so far as used, was only successful as rendered so by the gracious and promised influences of the Spirit of God: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord."

It has been objected to this view of the subject, that some of these great religious movements have been characterized by great enthusiasm and an unholy admixture of ignorance and of human passions, which cannot, without great irreverence, be attributed to the special influence of the Spirit of God. It is admitted, in some instances, that much of evil has been mixed with the good, and that the effects of what is clearly *human* has marred and obscured what is manifestly *Divine*. There is, however, one infallible test by which we may discriminate in such cases:—"By their fruits ye shall know them." When we see multitudes, who before were careless, worldly, and irreligious, awakened to religious anxiety, and exhibiting afterwards the genuine fruits of religion in their lives, it would be irrational to attribute such results to mere human enthusiasm, or to deny the special influence of the Spirit of God in such great, spiritual, and abiding moral transformations. The *suddenness*, or the rapid and wide spread of such religious movements, are no more an argument against this, than were the suddenness and rapid spread of such movements in the Apostolic and early days of Christianity.

Such revivals of religion as those in England and America, which have been noticed, viewed in connexion with the Divine promises which warrant our expectations of an abundant outpouring of the Spirit of God, may well raise the hopes of the Church as to the future. We are thus taught, as one justly remarks, "how easy it will be for our blessed Lord to make a full accomplishment of all his predictions concerning his kingdom, and to spread his dominion from sea to sea, through all the nations of the earth. We see how easy it is for Him, with one turn of his hand, with one word of his mouth, to awaken whole countries of stupid and sleeping sinners, and kindle Divine life in their souls. The heavenly influence shall run from door to door, filling the hearts and lips of every inhabitant with importunate inquiries — 'What shall we do to be saved?' And the name of Christ the Saviour shall diffuse itself like a rich and vital perfume to multitudes that were ready to sink and perish under the painful sense of their own guilt and danger. Salvation shall spread through all the tribes and ranks of mankind, as the lightning from heaven, in a few moments, would communicate a living flame through ten thousand lamps or torches placed in a proper situation or neighbourhood. Thus, '*a nation shall be born in a day*' when our Redeemer please, and his faithful and obedient subjects shall become as numerous as the spires of grass in a meadow newly mown, and refreshed with the showers of heaven."

CHAPTER XX.

TIMES OF REFRESHING IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, TO THE PRESENT TIME.

IN studying the history of the Church, the Christian cannot fail to observe a *preparatory* work, gradually advancing, for the fuller development and accomplishment of the Divine purposes towards a sinful world. This is seen in reference to that eventful period on which we now enter. During the long time of religious torpor and decay of the previous century, irreligion and infidelity fearfully prevailed. Vigorous and subtle efforts were made by the leading advocates of infidelity to sap the foundations of all religion, natural and revealed. At such a time, it pleased God to raise up several noble and powerful champions "for the faith once delivered to the saints." At this time, it has been well remarked, "Reason came forward to protest against being dissociated from Revelation. Locke had vindicated the reasonableness of Christianity. Sounder adherents to the ancient faith descended into the arena, and overthrew the flimsy arguments which could only impose upon minds of the most superficial cast. So fully was the evidence from prophecy vindicated by

Sherlock, the genuineness of Christian miracles by Douglas, the harmony of the resurrection by Sherlock and others, that this department of the Christian armoury has left nothing to be desired for its completeness. The Dissenter, Leland, did good service by his 'View of Deistical Writers;' and Lardner has deserved well of religion by his 'Demonstration of the Credibility of the Gospel History,' although his creed was unhappily Socinian. Beyond all question, the great work of the age, and one to which Infidelity has never ventured a reply, was 'The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed,' by Bishop Butler, wherein it is shown, with overwhelming force of argument and felicity of illustration, that no objection can be brought against the Christian system which does not lie equally against those laws of Divine government under which men find themselves naturally placed, and that no one can reject the Gospel without running counter to every principle by which he acts in the most important affairs of life. Nor was the defence of revelation confined to ecclesiastics. Gilbert West ably maintained the consistency of the Evangelical accounts of the resurrection. Soame Jenyns brought out the internal evidence to the truth of Christianity, arising from its peculiar and exalted morality; and the first Lord Lyttelton, rescued from infidelity by his efforts to satisfy himself concerning its grounds, gave to the world the benefit of his reflections on the conversion and apostleship of St. Paul, pointing out the important bearing which his life

and labours have on the reality of that miraculous event, through which so mighty a change was effected, and, by consequence, on the entire Christian system, the truth of which it involves. By these and similar efforts, infidelity, if not convinced, was silenced, and its boasted claims to reason reduced to their just dimensions in the estimation of reasonable men." *

At the same time that the great bulwarks of Christianity were thus successfully defended and strengthened, and the minds of the intellectual and thinking classes of the nation were re-established in the faith, the widely spreading influence of that great revival of religion, which has been noticed in a former chapter, was producing a vital and sounder tone of religious feeling, which was rapidly and widely permeating all classes of the community. Looking at it from this point of view, we are enabled better to judge of the necessity, the character, and results of that great religious movement, as the special preparation by God of our country for that great time of trial and danger near at hand, and which was soon developed in the horrors of the French Revolution of 1788-9. Thus the national mind was prepared to resist the dreadful effects of those anti-social and infidel principles which in France caused the overthrow of social order and religion, and which spread with such desolating effect over a great part of Europe. A revived and reviving state of religious faith and feel-

* "Church History," by John A. Baxter, M.A.

ing was the great *conservative* principle of the nation in this time of imminent danger.

It was also the happiness of the nation, and a special mark of the favour of God, that the monarch on the throne—George III.—was a sovereign firm in his religious principles, and resolved to elevate the standard of morality, of which he exhibited so bright an example in his own life and in the purity of his court. In all this he exhibited proof of the sincerity of the resolution he had expressed to the Convocation of 1780, “to support the interests of our holy religion upon the principles of the Reformation against the encroachments of licentiousness or superstition.” Hence the repeated Proclamations issued against gaming, the desecration of the Lord’s-day, and licentious publications; and the encouragement given to efforts for promoting the religious instruction of the poorer children of the land. It was the nobly expressed wish of George III., “that every child in his dominions might have a Bible, and be able to read it.” “Hence,” it has been truly observed, “when infidelity, after deluging an infatuated nation (France) with misery and blood, prepared to invade our shores, every class of society was found to be, in some measure, providentially fortified against its influence.”

The merciful design of God in all this was not only to preserve our country from the dangers arising from infidelity and revolution, of which so fearful an exhibition was soon to be given in France, but a further design was to awaken and prepare the Church to a

proper feeling of her high duty and destiny, of communicating the blessings of the religion of Christ to the unenlightened at home and the millions of the heathen abroad. The attempts made in a neighbouring State for the overthrow of all religion, and the horrors which marked the progress of that infidel effort, gave rise to a wide-spread feeling in all reflecting minds in this country of the essential importance of true religion as the best cement of society—as the only effectual means of preserving social order, and a blessing to the world. From this, more than from any former period, may be dated the rise of the many noble Christian Societies which are among the brightest honours of our country, and which have proved so useful in spreading the light and influence of Christianity both at home and in various parts of the world. We can only briefly notice these noble Societies in the order in which they arose, and this will be best done by abridging the statement given by a writer before quoted.

Amongst the “more strenuous efforts to amend and bless mankind,” as resulting from the revival of Evangelical religion, the philanthropic efforts of a Howard and a Wilberforce in behalf of the prisoner and the negro are entitled to the foremost mention. The stimulus arising from them to missionary enterprise among all classes of Christians was great. For more than a century previous the Church of England had evinced her interest in this important work by the efforts of her “Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign

Parts." The success of her apostolic missionary, Swartz, in India, and of other labourers in other of our Colonies, was great, and fully commensurate with the means of her pecuniary expenditure. But the *object* of the Propagation Society was primarily colonial, and only *indirectly* bearing upon the heathen independent of British rule. A wider and more catholic field of missionary enterprise was now desired and opened to the Christian Church. The Wesleyans sent out missionaries to the West Indies, the Baptists to Serampore, and the London Missionary Society, formed on a liberal basis, uniting Churchmen and Dissenters, to the South Sea Islanders. The Church Missionary Society commenced its noble and successful efforts in 1800, with special reference, in the first instance, to Africa and the East. The year 1804 was distinguished by the formation of the British and Foreign Bible Society. It was formed on the catholic basis of uniting all denominations of Christians for the one object of circulating at home and among, and in the languages of, all nations, the Holy Scriptures, "without note or comment." "The obvious recommendations of the Bible Society are—an increased and more concentrated power of communicating religious knowledge of the most necessary kind, by combined rather than separate exertions; the advantages of exhibiting the fundamental agreement of Protestants as regards the sacred text whereon their common Christianity is based; the charitable feeling which it is, at least, the tendency

of the Society to promote between pious men, doubtless accepted of God, who are unable to unite in one communion ; the important assistance it has afforded to all Christian missions ; the rendering the sacred Scriptures accessible at a price within the reach of the poorest ; the fact that there is no other Institution by which the same objects are effected ; and that Bible distribution alone deserves a distinct Association, recommended by its simplicity and comprehensiveness, and willingness to co-operate being, by the very nature of the work, sufficient as the condition of membership." The Religious Tract Society, formed about the same time, or rather a little before, was of a similar catholic character. It originated in the necessity of circulating small tracts to supply an antidote to the poison of infidelity, extensively conveyed through cheap publications into the cottages of the poor. These Societies and efforts for the religious benefit of the unenlightened at home and the heathen abroad, as was to be expected, soon awakened Christian sympathy for God's ancient people, the Jews. In 1808, the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews was formed. During this eventful time, the establishment and working of Sunday and other Christian schools were imparting to the millions of the children of the poorer and middle classes the invaluable and eternal benefits of religious knowledge, and permeating the great masses of society among us by the leaven of the Gospel, which teacheth to "deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, and

righteously, and godly in this evil world." Thus, through the overruling providence of God, what was at the time regarded with fear, "turned out unto the furtherance of the Gospel." The storms which threatened to lay waste and uproot Christianity only caused it to strike a deeper and firmer root, to multiply and extend its branches, "the leaves of which are for the healing of the nations."

The period we are now reviewing, embracing in it the last sixty years, may well be denominated *the Missionary and Catholic era of the Church*. A new spirit, a new power and impulse, was thus given to the Church of Christ. For centuries the missionary character of the Church had been comparatively overlooked: but few and languid efforts had been made to fulfil the Saviour's command, to preach the Gospel in all the world. Now, the Church, "receiving power from on high," awoke, and aroused herself for the performance of this her high and glorious destiny. This new impulse spread through every section of the Church. Devoted missionaries, qualified for the work, "hazarding their lives," went forth to distant lands, "to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ among the heathen." Associations and Societies for this object were formed, whose combined energies mutually encouraged and strengthened each other. It was soon seen that the reaction of these efforts to spread the Gospel in heathen lands was to produce similar zeal for the wider spread of religion at home: the success which it pleased God

to give to these efforts to impart the Gospel to the distant heathen redounded in a still greater degree upon the heathen at home, in an astonishing revival of religion in the Church, and the multiplication of Societies and efforts to spread religious knowledge and influence over the length and breadth of our own country. This revival of missionary zeal in the Church, as was to be expected, introduced a more catholic spirit among the professors of Christianity, and supplied the occasion for its exercise and development. The same circumstances which united them in zeal to resist irreligion and infidelity at home, and to spread the Gospel abroad, gave them a better knowledge of each other, and a more Christian and catholic feeling towards each other: they were brought to feel that, notwithstanding sectional peculiarities, they were "one body in Christ"—though ranged under different banners, and belonging to different companies, they, in all that was Christian and essential, constituted "one army of the living God," leagued against a common enemy for the triumph of one Sovereign and Master, Jesus Christ. Thus the cause of Christ was rapidly advanced both at home and abroad. Who can doubt that these were "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord"?

What have been the results of this revived state of religion at home, and of these glorious efforts for the spread of the Gospel among the heathen? To judge of these correctly,—and especially in reference to our

own country,—we must divest our minds of certain fears and prejudices entertained by some. It is no valid argument, that notwithstanding the mighty efforts made for the moral and spiritual amelioration of our country, irreligion and misery should so fearfully abound among us. Such an objection overlooks the vast and rapid increase of population and the disproportioned increase of those appliances for the religious improvement of that population, and the consequent accumulative power of evil. It overlooks the fact, that much of the evil complained of existed before, though not brought to light, as now, when Christian zeal and compassion, exploring the haunts of misery and vice, have thrown open to us those appalling scenes which failed to excite our commiseration, simply because they were unknown to us. It overlooks the force of that aggressive and restraining power of vital religion, in the vast amount of evil which it has checked and repressed, and which but for this, like an overwhelming flood, would have covered the length and breadth of the land, laying waste, as in a neighbouring country, all that we value, as social and religious among us; and, finally, this objection overlooks the fact that the seed-time and harvest are not the same thing. The vast amount and extent of Scripture circulation, and the application in multifarious ways of religion on the people of this country, hitherto has been as the sowing of the seed; the harvest is certain and approaching: “first the blade, then the

ear, and afterwards the full corn in the ear." The fields in which some can discern little more than the springing of the weeds and thorns, and on which they deem so much culture to have been bestowed in vain, will be differently regarded by others. These, though they see much of coldness and barrenness to deplore, will derive encouragement in knowing that the good seed is in the ground, and will hail with joy and hope the springing of the seed; and, looking up to God for his blessing, will look forward with confidence to the sure coming harvest of general, social, and religious amelioration. "For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all nations." * The results of Christian efforts during the last sixty years fully sustain this view of the subject. Probably since the days of the apostles there has been no revival or extension of religion greater than what has taken place during the period we have named. We may appeal to the vast increase in the number of evangelical and zealous preachers of the Gospel,—to the astonishing multiplication of new churches and other places of religious worship,—to the extension of religious education,—to the abolition of slavery and the great attention to the wants of the poor,—to the efforts for the spread of religion, both at home and abroad,—to the elevation of the moral and religious tone of

* Isaiah lxi. 11.

society generally, and the numerous other direct and indirect benefits of the religion of Christ so widely felt and to be observed, to justify the conclusion that we have been visited in a remarkable manner with "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord."

The progress and results of missionary efforts abroad are no less remarkable and encouraging. Here, also, we see abundant reason to "thank God and take courage." There are, however, those who look on the vast fields of missionary labour, already whitening for harvest, with different anticipations. From mistaken views of prophecy, as we deem, they see in the future the general, wide-spread, and triumph of evil, which, however short in duration, is to precede immediately the final triumphs of the Gospel and the millennial glory of the Church of Christ. A view this, as gloomy, as antagonistic of the results of spreading religion and of its advancing progress and triumphs. Some, looking on the immeasurable regions of yet dominant paganism, ignorance, and superstition, draw the chilling conclusion, that but little has yet been done in the cause of heathen evangelism; and that the results thus far are by no means commensurate with the amount of zeal, and expenditure, and labour employed in the work. This objection overlooks the painful fact of the neglect or partial performance by the Church of the duty enjoined by the Saviour of preaching his Gospel to every creature. Had the Christian Church been properly alive to, and zealous in, this work of spread-

ing the Gospel in unenlightened nations, it is not too much to affirm, that, ere now, the Gospel would have permeated and triumphed over the larger portions of the paganism and heathenism which exist in the world. Had the proclamation of the Gospel been as universally made, as was commanded by the Saviour, we may infer from its triumphs in apostolic days, and from the Divine promises, that universal Christianity would have followed in its train. The present partial and limited spread of the Gospel, however, so far from justifying despondency as to the future, is, on the contrary, of a nature to encourage; inasmuch as present results are fully commensurate, yea, exceed the amount of expenditure, zeal, and labour employed by the Church for the accomplishment of the great work. The *early* Reports of our Missionary Societies, when it was "the day of small things," when compared with the reports of the present time, both as to the state of funds, the number of missionaries, and the glorious success of their labours, viewed in connexion with the opening of vast fields for missionary efforts, will fully sustain this cheering view of the subject. "It is not enough," remarks Dr. Chalmers, "that we look to the state of Christianity as it *now* stands. We should look to Christianity *in progress*. For by however small a fraction we may compute its hold on our species now, a time is coming when we shall cease to count it by minorities and remnants. The eye of God not only explores the present, but, with a thorough cognizance

of time as well as space, it reaches onward to the most distant future. He not only knows, but He foreknows. By the voice of an immediate revelation, He gave comfort to the despairing heart of Elijah when He told him of the numbers who, even at the time of what seemed an all but universal defection and idolatry, still held by the true religion. And by the voice of prophecy in Scripture He gives the like comfort to us, as we cast perhaps a desponding eye over the moral state and prospects of the world, in the bright perspective which He has there opened up to us, of the enlargement and the triumphs that still await the Gospel of his Son. For amid all that is fitted to darken and discourage, we should recollect of the present that it is but the infancy of the Christian religion, and that we are yet among the struggles and the uncertainties of its embryo state. Could we see the whole in the light of the infinite mind, could we be made to behold across our present day of small things, the evolutions of a greatness and prosperity still in reserve, even for a world now lying in wickedness; or did the mighty and successive eras of the Divine administration rise in vision before us, then instead of looking forward with dejection or dismay, we should lift up our heads and rejoice in the destinies of our species."

In an interesting paper read by the Rev. Dr. Barth at "The Conference of the Evangelical Alliance" at Paris in 1855, the following statement of the progress of Christian Missions among the Heathen was made. The

statement is here abridged :—The *receipts of eight* of the principal Missionary Societies* of Europe and America in 1855 were about 352,037*l*. The number of missionaries supported by fifteen Societies about 1,581 ; of assistant missionaries of six Societies, 1,362. Number of other agents supported by eleven Societies, 11,965. Number of communicants of eight Societies, 166,027. Pupils in the schools of eleven Societies, 133,497. If this statement be compared with the results announced in the early reports of Missionary Societies, it will furnish delightful evidence of the increase of missionary zeal and success. If from this general statement we come to particulars, we shall find additional reasons for gratitude and encouragement. If we look to India, the state of which at present is of such absorbing interest, “In the commencement of 1852 twenty-two Societies were employed in India and Ceylon. Under their direction 443 missionary labourers, of whom 48 were ordained natives. The native catechists numbered 698. They reckoned 313 missionary stations ; 331 communities of Pagans converted to Christianity ; 18,410 communicants ; 112,191 native Christians, and 2,015 schools, with 18,836 pupils of both sexes. The whole Bible was then translated into ten languages, the New Testament into fifteen, and

* The Church of England ; the London and the Baptist Missionary Societies ; the Missionary Society of Basle ; the Wesleyan Missionary Society ; the Society of Paris ; that of the Rhine, and that of the Moravian Brethren.

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several Gospels into nineteen languages." Since 1852 the work of Missions in India has greatly extended. In the Punjaub, the great native Prince Dhuleb Singh has shown himself favourable to Christianity ; and the most important towns of the country are occupied by missionaries. "In Hindostan, on the field occupied by the Missions of Basle, there have been converted, from 1849 to 1854, as many persons as during the fifteen years preceding. In Indo-China, the Burman war has excited the hope that new and large doors will be opened before the messengers of peace. In China, the ancient foundations of the great wall have been destroyed in such a manner as could not have been predicted a few years back. On the waters which have been stagnant for so many centuries a violent storm has broken, shaking them to their depths. Whatever may be the issue of these movements they will advance the kingdom of Christ, and the breach made in the great wall will never be entirely repaired. A Mission has been formed in the Island of Java among the natives, as hitherto the word of the Gospel had only had access in that country to the Chinese and Malays. Twenty-five years ago there were in the South Sea Islands only forty-three missionaries, there are now a hundred and twenty. The Evangelical Church, which then numbered only there 25,000 adherents, now numbers 267,000, of whom 45,680 are communicants. Four years ago the Isles of Figi were known only in connexion with the horrors of war and the

feasts of cannibals. Now, the latest intelligence informs us that the inhuman King of the country of Bau has been received with all his suite into the bosom of the Christian Church." In Madagascar the Gospel has gained its numerous converts; though the missionaries have been banished, and many of the Christian converts have been cruelly martyred, yet there it has been found that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." New Zealand, once known to us only as the land of savages and cannibals, by missionary efforts has been Christianized, made a valuable colony of our country, and has its national religious establishments and its Christian bishops. The West Indies and Sierra Leone have become missionary stations for the interior of Africa. As the central regions of that part of the world, so populous and so mysterious, were for the most part inaccessible to missionaries, God overruled the wickedness and cupidity of the slave-trade in tearing away the negro population from their dark regions, thus transferring them into other lands that they might receive the light of the Gospel to carry it back to their benighted countrymen. Converted negroes have gone out from Sierra Leone, impelled by a desire to carry their good news into their ancient country from which they were torn. It is thus that the Missions of Badagry and Abbeokouta have taken their rise; even in Lagos, the great slave market, the trade in negroes has been

rendered all but impossible, and here missionaries are labouring successfully.

In this cursory review of the progress and success of Christian Missions among the heathen, imperfect as it is, the great importance of *native agency* and of *the Bible Society*, cannot have escaped observation. A larger amount of missionary success than we are aware is to be traced, directly and indirectly, to the efforts and influence of converted natives. As in the case of the converted negroes of Sierra Leone, so in the case of converted natives in other parts of the missionary field, they have been the pioneers to open and prepare the way for missionaries, and have carried the Gospel to those parts to which missionaries have not had access. Thus it has happened, missionaries visiting places for the first time have been delightfully surprised on finding a people prepared for the reception of the Gospel by the labours of converted natives who had carried the light of Christianity there before them. In how many instances, and to a far greater extent than we are aware, are such the results of the silent and unknown circulation of the Word of God, thus realizing the truth of the Saviour's words,—“the seed springeth up we know not *how*.” Missionaries in Burmah, in Africa, in the Islands of the South Sea, following in the track of native agency and Scripture circulation, have thus found, to their joy, the desert blossoming as the rose. The fact that our missionaries find among

native converts so great a number of men capable of instructing others is one of the most encouraging features of missionary success. These, as it is well observed, "fall into the ranks of labourers, for each one then enrolls a new battalion of disciples under the standard of Jesus. They are like corn in the sack of the sower, every grain carrying the germ of an ear with its numerous grains. They are like fruit, of which the kernel, planted in the earth, becomes a tree." Thus converts to Christianity among the heathen multiplying themselves, the work of evangelism goes forward with cumulative power and widening and accelerated rapidity. Our hope, therefore, of the wider spread of the Gospel among the heathen, and of its triumphs, rests principally, not so much on the increase in the number of European missionaries as on the increasing numbers, zeal, and training by our missionaries, of converted native agents. The connexion and correlative influence between the efforts of the Bible Society and such missionary efforts is too important to be overlooked in this view of the subject. The Word of God printed and read, and the preaching of the Word, are the two great means which God hath ordained for the conversion of mankind;—"Faith cometh by *hearing*, and hearing by the Word of God." While our missionaries are the great instruments in the translation of the Holy Scriptures into the languages and dialects of the heathen world, the Bible Society prints them, and becomes the great instrument of circulating them

among the heathen. Thus these two great Societies—Missionary and Bible—are essential to each other, and work together as the divinely co-ordinate means of “covering the earth with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.” It is impossible to calculate what have been, and will yet become, the glorious results of the forty or fifty millions of copies of the Word of God which Bible Societies have already circulated in different parts of the world. “The seed is the Word of God;”—that precious seed has been scattered and taken root in parts which have not been traversed by Christian missionaries: in many parts of the heathen world, especially in China, it has sprung up and borne fruit unseen by Christian eye. Let us then, while mourning the wide-spreading regions of heathenism, teeming with its many millions of unenlightened heathen, console our minds with the thought that the “seed” of the Word of God is more widely, than we are aware, scattered and in the ground; and that, ere long, the heavenly showers of Divine influence will descend from on high, and the harvest time of the moral world will surely come, and may come sooner than we are aware. “Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.” *

The view we have taken of the present results of Missions among the heathen may well awaken in us

* Psalm lxxvii. 6, 7.

thankfulness for the past and encouragement for the future. These are delightful evidences of "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord." If so much has been effected in the first half of the present century, which has been the time of sowing the seed, what may not, with the blessing of God, be looked for during the latter half of the century? The light of the Gospel, which has broken upon and is spreading in many a dark region of heathenism, is leading on to the full splendours of that day when God will "destroy the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations."* The sure word of prophecy and promise, viewed in connexion with the aspect and tendency of providential movements, warrant this hope. "The pagan earth," as one remarks, "quakes; the pillars of the old pagodas tremble; the missions have found a fulcrum which enables them to upheave the systems of idolatry; the confidence of the Pagans in their gods is destroyed; the idols see their dominion, which had lasted many thousand years, annihilated; and the only question now is, to whom the heritage will fall? Will it be to Mohammedanism, —a religion also doomed to death? Will it be to infidelity, which possesses in itself no vivifying power? Will it be to the Gospel, which advances over the globe, carrying with it the promises of victory? Thinking Hindoos themselves begin to be aware that they cannot now long resist the slow and invisible pro-

* Isa. xxv. 7.

gress of Christian influence. They avow it, and say, 'For ourselves we shall not become Christians; but our children will not long be able to keep themselves from it.' The silent activity of Christian ideas, which, propagated by schools, by books, and by the preaching of the Gospel, insinuate themselves little by little into the nation, and undermine the soil of Paganism, ought to be appreciated far higher than the visible results of missionary labour as registered on paper in their reports." Look where we will, all encourages Christian hope for the future; every system of heathenism has lost its power of progress and is paralyzed; the crescent pales before the kindling glories of the cross in every part of her empire; infidelity, with her weapons of attack on Christianity shivered, retires in confusion from the field of contest; Judaism, sickened in heart from the failure of long-cherished hopes, begins to embrace the Christian hope of her Messiah;—these, with all the movements of the present times agitating the political world to her centre, announce the near coming of the day of general redemption of the world from ignorance, superstition, and sin, to a state of enlightenment, blessedness, and prevailing holiness and joy.

What, in such "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord," is the duty of the Christian Church, and of every member of the Church? Who can doubt the call of God to more prayer, more zeal, more liberality, and more self-denying efforts and sacri-

fices for the spread of the Gospel? *More earnest and united prayer is needed.* How earnestly should we seek of God that more abundant outpouring of his Holy Spirit upon the Church, yea, "upon all flesh," which He has promised, and which is needed for the spread and triumphs of the Gospel in all the world. The Gospel is emphatically "the ministration of the Spirit,"—it is to his gracious influence its success hitherto must be ascribed; and here is our hope as to its future triumphs. With God is the residue of the Spirit, and He has promised to "give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." There are more abundant outpourings and manifestations of the power of the Spirit to be expected by the Christian Church than have ever yet been realized. For these the Church must seek and wrestle by earnest and united prayer. Let God, as He has graciously promised, thus "pour" out his Holy Spirit, and there will be a rapid success and progress of the cause of truth in the world as in the times of primitive Christianity; the seed of his Holy Word so widely scattered will everywhere spring up and bear fruit; the glad tidings of salvation will spread throughout the world, and the wide-spread wildernesses of Paganism and superstition shall "rejoice and blossom as the rose; the idols shall cease out of the land;" "all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of God,"—"all nations shall call the Saviour blessed, and be blessed in Him." *More zeal and more of self-denying sacrifices are required.* We are put in trust with the

Gospel to communicate it to others who have it not ; we are thus blessed, that we may impart the blessing to others. The Saviour's language to us is :—" Freely ye have received, freely give." It becomes every Christian to bring this matter home to his own conscience. Of how few can it be said, as of one in the Gospel, " She hath done what she *could*." To glorify Him, and to make Him known to a perishing world as a Saviour, Christ expects of all who love Him that they should do what they can, and do their best. How often, when the appeal is made to such to aid in sending the Gospel to the heathen, is the appeal answered by the chilling excuse, for niggardliness and neglect, of inability to afford it, or the plea of " being just before they are generous." Let this plea of worldliness be reversed. We must, as Christians, *be just to God before we are generous to ourselves*. Ought the lovers of the Saviour, who, " though He was rich, for their sakes became poor," who " redeemed them to God with the price of his own precious blood," think it a hard thing to deny themselves of superfluities and luxuries to enable them more liberally to aid the work of spreading the Gospel throughout the world ? Everything which falls short of self-denial and sacrifice falls short of that self-denial which Christ demands as evidence of love to Him. In a country so abounding in wealth as this much more can be done, and far much more must be done to make known " the unsearchable riches of Christ among the heathen." Is it

unreasonable to expect that our Christian nobles, from the splendid amount of their rent rolls,—that our merchant princes, from their splendid gains,—that our numerous wealthy congregations,—should not, and will not, ere long, feel it their duty and privilege each to have a missionary among the heathen as their *representative*, thus testifying their gratitude and love to the Saviour, and their zeal for the conversion of the world? When the extent of the regions of heathenism yet to be evangelized, and the many wide and encouraging fields for missionary labour now opened and opening to the Church, are considered, it is manifest that a higher standard of zeal and liberality must be reached by the Church at large, and by individual Christians, for the spread of the Gospel throughout the world. God is now, by past success, by prophecy and promise, by providential movements, loudly calling upon his Church and people to rise to a higher standard and exercise of prayer, of zeal, of labour and self-denying sacrifices for the conversion of the world. If the Church be but faithful to her obligations and destiny in this, a larger measure of blessing than has yet been experienced will be granted to her; the Spirit will be poured out in a more copious manner; “the Word of the Lord will have free course, run, and be glorified;” the Jews shall be brought into the Church of Christ together with the fulness of the Gentiles; every superstition, and every obstacle opposed to the kingdom of Christ, shall be removed; “the kingdoms of this world

shall become the kingdoms of our God and his Christ ;” “ the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.” “ As surely as I live ” (saith the Lord) “ the whole earth shall be filled with his glory.”

We conclude in the words of an able writer:—
“ Though it may seem long to those whose bodies must moulder in the grave before it arrives, the time is brief, when compared with the past duration of the world, until the era shall commence, when the veil shall be rent which is spread over the face of all people. According to the sure word of prophecy, allowing for the variety of interpretation, before the oak, which was planted yesterday, shall have reached its full maturity, the whole earth shall have become the garden of the Lord. The fulness of the Gentiles, in every sense, is at hand. The earth will soon be full of people and full of knowledge ; the desert is beginning to bloom, and the darkness to disperse, and the minds of men are ripening for, and expectant of, the greatest change which as yet has passed over the earth.”

One song employs all nations, and all cry,
Worthy the Lamb, for He was slain for us.
The dwellers in the vale and in the rocks
Shout to each other, and the mountain-tops
From distant mountains catch the flying joy,
Till nation after nation, taught the strain,
Earth rolls the rapturous Hosannah round.

NOTE.

REVIVALS.

SINCE the writing of the previous pages, have occurred the late and present remarkable religious movements in America, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and in many parts of this country. Various, as might be expected, are the opinions formed of these movements. They are so remarkable in character,—so widespread and spreading, and the fruits of them are, in very numerous instances, so decidedly Christian, that even sceptics and the worldly have been awed to silence and wonder; and real Christians are constrained gratefully to recognise in them the work of God—the effects of a remarkable outpouring of the Spirit of God in answer to prayer,—and a special means of preparation of the Church of Christ for the great work of evangelizing the world. The remarks on Revivals at the close of *Chapter XIX.* will apply in these cases. In all great religious movements, much of the phenomena urged by many as objectionable, in the present cases, may be traced to the sympathy which pervades, to a great extent, large gatherings of people in a state of unwonted excitement and emotion. Such great religious movements will be found to take a type and character from the peculiar character and temperament of those among whom they occur. It will, therefore, not excite surprise that, among a people so sanguine and excitable as the Americans, Irish, and Welsh, there should be manifested, under such circumstances, great excitement, enthusiasm, extravagance, and certain physiological phenomena, urged against the Revivals of

the present day ; or that the great enemy of God and his truth should sow "*tares*" in the field in which has been sown the precious "*wheat*." We are no more justified in ignoring what has occurred as *the work of God* on this account than we should be in denying the miracles of Moses because of the imitations of them by the magicians of Egypt. We are too near the events at present to decide as to the reality and extent of these revivals as the marvellous work of God. "By their fruits ye shall know them," is the infallible test given us by the Saviour to judge of them. When, however, as in this case, we learn from undoubted authority that thousands have been converted from ungodliness to godliness,—that swearers have become men of prayer,—that drunkards have become sober,—that neglecters of God's house have been brought to reverence and love the ordinances of religion, and are evidencing their sincerity by renewed and sanctified lives ; when all this, and much more, is confirmed by the testimony of magistrates, by ministers of religion, bishops and clergy, and even by secular journalists, we cannot doubt that these great religious movements are the work of God,—the blessed results of a remarkable outpouring of the Spirit of God,—designed in mercy for the progress and wider spread of true religion at home and abroad. When we look at our orchard and garden in the spring and see the somewhat sudden outburst and exuberance of blossom, we anticipate abundant ingathering of fruit. We are not so sanguine as to expect that all blossom will end in fruitfulness ; but we know, at the same time, that without the blossom we cannot have the fruit. So it is here. Much that is now promising may disappoint us. Over how many promising converts may we have to mourn and say,—"*Thy goodness is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew, —it passeth away!*" How many will be found to resemble the stony-ground hearers of the parable :—"*Some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth ; and immediately it*

sprang up, because it had no depth of earth; and when the sun was up it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away." (Mark iv. 5, 6.) Notwithstanding all this, it is the duty of the Christian devoutly and thankfully to acknowledge what is clearly the work of God in these revivals, and to offer up earnest prayer that the multitudes brought under their influence may "bring forth fruit unto perfection." The world needs, and the Church is encouraged by many precious promises to expect, an abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit to accelerate and widen the spread of vital religion, and secure its ultimate triumphs over our fallen world; ought we not to rejoice in what has and is now occurring as the harbingers of the coming "showers of blessing," and earnestly to pray for them? "God be merciful unto us and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us." (Ps. lxvii.)

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